

Syria to free 5,000 under amnesty bill

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria is preparing to free more than 5,000 prisoners under an amnesty bill presented to parliament last week by President Hafez Al Assad, officials said Monday. "If the law is approved without amendments, more than 5,000 prisoners sentenced before November 1995 will be freed," an official said, adding that 13,600 people in total were held in the country's jails. The official, who said Syria had "several dozen political prisoners, including around 20 members of the (banned) Muslim Brotherhood," indicated that most of those freed would be prisoners jailed for economic crimes. The proposed amnesty was presented to parliament on Thursday to mark Mr. Assad's 25th anniversary of his accession to power. The new bill, which focuses on economic crimes including those involving foreign currency, envisages reducing life sentences handed down by economic security courts to 20 years of hard labour. Syria freed 1,200 political prisoners, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood and supporters of the jailed communist leader Riad Al Turk, under an amnesty in November.

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Peres unveils negotiating points accepted by Assad

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Monday that Syria had agreed to a nine-point programme for negotiations which could produce a final peace agreement before Israeli elections in October.

Speaking to a closed-door session of his Labour Party group in parliament, Mr. Peres said the negotiating principles had been accepted by Syrian President Hafez Al Assad as the basis for talks to begin next week, according to deputies who attended the meeting.

He said a tenth point proposed a summit meeting with Mr. Assad, but was not accepted by the Syrian leader.

"There is an exceptional opportunity to make peace with Syria," he was quoted as telling the Labour members of the parliament, or Knesset.

"We have 10 months until the elections. If it is possible to reach a good agreement, there is no reason not to go ahead with it before the elections," he said. "I can't remember a time when Syria is much in favour of peace as

today." The prime minister said his proposals were relayed to Mr. Assad by U.S. President Bill Clinton and formed the basis for the Israeli-Syrian agreement, announced Saturday, to launch wide-ranging peace talks next week at a secluded location near Washington.

Among the ideas, Mr. Peres said the offer of a summit meeting with Mr. Assad "was a proposal and not a precondition" for talks.

Among the nine points accepted by Mr. Assad were talks on "finding ways to turn the Golan Heights into a centre of economic cooperation instead of a battlefield," Mr. Peres said.

Responding to reports that he had already offered a return of the Golan to Syria, Mr. Peres said, "I have committed myself to no territorial concessions. If concessions are needed, I will inform the Knesset."

Mr. Peres was quoted by a senior aide as telling the Knesset foreign and defence affairs committee earlier Monday that Israel could agree to an accelerated with-

drawal from the Golan as part of a peace deal with Syria.

"I am considering a stepped up withdrawal from the Golan Heights because it is better to jump a chasm in one step rather than two," he said.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs on Monday organised a ceremony at the Islamic Cultural Centre of the King Abdullah Mosque in Amman attended by His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Prince Hamzeh, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and senior government officials.

Minister of Awqaf Abdul

Peres said that "calm must be observed along the Israeli-Lebanese border."

The senior official said this

(Continued on page 7)

Sheikh Sabah retracts resignation submitted in dispute over Jordan

KUWAIT CITY (Agencies) — Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, who had announced he was resigning after a clash with the prime minister, withdrew his decision at the request of the emir on Monday.

"On the instructions of Emir Jaber (Al Ahmad Al Sabah)... I will continue my activities to serve the interests of my country and my people," Sheikh Sabah told journalists after a meeting with the ruler of Kuwait.

In an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Qabas published earlier the same day, he said that "differences over foreign policy" had prompted his resignation.

"I don't think I'll reconsider my decision," he said, adding the resignation was handed in during a meeting of the cabinet on Sunday.

A government official who requested anonymity said Sheikh Sabah left the government meeting and handed in his resignation after Sheikh Saad criticised him for telling reporters that ties with Jordan would be normalised.

Sheikh Sabah had proposed submitting the issue to a government vote, but the prime minister decided to pass it on to the emir, cutting the conversation short and forcing the foreign minister to leave the meeting, the official said.

Diplomats here said Sheikh Sabah favoured a rapprochement with countries such as Jordan that were accused of supporting Iraq after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, while the prime minister remained strongly opposed.

Sheikh Sabah, keen both to isolate former occupier

Iraq and also keep Kuwait in the mainstream of Arab opinion, is in favour of restoring full relations with Jordan and also possibly Yemen.

But Sheikh Saad says such countries must do more to placate angry Kuwaiti opinion before any reconciliation can take place.

Sheikh Sabah, in his mid-60s, is one of the world's longest serving foreign ministers and is a half-brother of the emir. He has held his post since 1963 apart from a long break after the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

He is also deputy prime minister, chairman of the Higher Petroleum Council — the top body overseeing the broad strategy of the oil and petrochemical industries —

(Continued on page 7)

Communists leading Russian election, but West unalarmed

MOSCOW (R) — Communists emerged on Monday as the big winners in Russia's parliamentary election ahead of nationalists and the pro-government party, sending ripples of concern but no shockwaves abroad.

Cashing in on discontent with hardships under market reforms, the Communist Party led with 21.9 per cent of the votes after almost half the ballots had been counted from Sunday's election to the State Duma (lower house).

Ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), defying its critics, was on 11.1 per cent. Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's centre-right Our Home is Russia bloc was third with 9.6 per cent.

"This is a complete rejec-

tion of the old radical system. The system has collapsed and become bankrupt," Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov told a news conference.

"In fact, the government has received a vote of no-confidence," he declared, setting out plans for a coalition of opposition forces, a new economic policy and demands for changes in the government.

The vote signalled dissatisfaction with Western-style reforms which have made a few rich but brought unemployment, insecurity and no improvement in living standards for most of the nearly 150 million people in the vast country.

But a calm Western reaction reflected the belief that

there can be no return to the Zygman past which disappeared in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of more than 70 years on one-party rule.

Financial markets showed little alarm. Investors and market dealers said real power lies with the strong presidency under Russia's constitution, limiting the communists' hopes of forcing immediate changes of policy.

Mr. Zyuganov is seen as relatively moderate, but not in the same mould as the social democrats in power in Eastern Europe. Some party members are more conservative than Mr. Zyuganov, who wants more state control in the economy and some subsidised prices.

(Continued on page 7)

Bosnia peace operations pick up momentum

TUZLA (Agencies) — U.S. Air Force transport planes flying out of Aviano in Italy, landed at an airbase here Monday — the first to arrive in five days — kickstarting a stalled U.S. mission.

The planes flew in men and equipment based at the U.S. airbase at Vicenza, U.S. spokesman Major Garrie Donald said.

Hampered by dense fog, U.S. forces have been unable for four days to fly into Tuzla, the command centre in northern Bosnia for the 20,000 U.S. soldiers who are to start enforcing the Bosnian peace treaty.

Maj. Dorman said 27 flights were planned through the day Monday with planes arriving every five or ten

minutes. As steady drizzle fell at the U.N.-run airbase in the Majevica hills near Tuzla, Maj. Dorman said it was a "huge relief" to have finally landed a plane after the problems of recent days.

The planes' arrival allows U.S. radar staff at Tuzla to calibrate the radar equipment at the Spartan airbase and should in theory mean that planes can fly in even if fog returns, radar operator Sergeant Perry Pennington said.

A formal transfer of authority from the United Nations to the NATO-led force in Bosnia is due to take place on Wednesday in Sarajevo, following the signing of the Bosnian peace treaty in Paris last week and U.N. and

NATO approval of the operation.

A first 130 U.S. ground troops moved down by rail and road Sunday from bases in Hungary to start preparing another route into Bosnia from Croatia via a pontoon bridge over the River Sava, for troops joining the Implementation Force (IFOR) for Bosnia.

British and French troops will take charge of the western and southern sectors of Bosnia under the operation Concerted Effort that is being organised. They will combine with the Americans and troops from 27 other countries to provide the 60,000-strong IFOR.

The Bosnian Serb assembly

has given tacit endorsement to the U.S.-brokered peace accord for Bosnia, as well as the green light for NATO to deploy its forces on Bosnian Serb territory.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic finally reached a compromise deal on the peace accord from the parliament after a heated 12-hour debate Sunday.

The assembly was meeting in the former ski resort of Jahorina, near the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Pale, to discuss the peace accord.

Sources close to the assembly said Mr. Karadzic succeeded in averting an overwhelming rejection of the peace accord by not putting it to a vote.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued on page 7)

Yasser Arafat begins Gulf tour

DOHA (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived here Monday for his first tour of the Gulf Arab states since he infuriated them by supporting Iraq during the 1990-1991 Gulf war. The official Qatar News Agency said Mr. Arafat, president of the autonomous Palestinian Authority (PNA), was welcomed by the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, and senior Qatari officials. Sheikh Hamad and Mr. Arafat will study "ways to activate bilateral cooperation and the Middle East peace process," the Palestinian representative here, Yassin Al Sharif, told the press. Mr. Arafat on Sunday welcomed the scheduled restart of the frozen peace talks between Syria and Israel on 27 Dec. Mr. Arafat is due next in Abu Dhabi for talks with the president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, authorities said. Doha announced in October the establishment of a holding company capitalised at \$250 million designed to invest industrial projects in the autonomous Palestinian areas. The UAE has said it would finance the construction of homes and subsidise the medical needs of Palestinians.

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

No Crown Prince visit in January, Israel says

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Israel on Monday denied reports that His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan was scheduled to visit the Jewish state next month and said that while there was a standing invitation to the Crown Prince to visit, no specifics had been finalised.

Shimon Shamir, the Israeli ambassador to Jordan, hinted, however, that the Crown Prince could be visiting Israel after the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The ambassador also reiterated that there was no deliberate Israeli refusal to allow a group of more than 500 Jordanian personalities to visit the West Bank to participate in Palestinian celebrations marking the

launch of self-rule in Nablus. He said the group's application was submitted too late to be processed in time for the trip on Friday.

On Israeli media reports that the Crown Prince was scheduled to visit Israel in January, the ambassador said:

"There is indeed a standing invitation to the Crown Prince to visit Israel, but no specifics have been finalised. The visit would take place at the right time and (under the) right circumstances."

"Any information on topics to be discussed is also unfounded," he added.

Pressed further, the ambassador said the visit would "certainly not take place before or during Ramadan" implying that it could

(Continued on page 7)

Newspapers cautioned over Shbeihat inquiry

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Press and Publications Department on Monday cautioned newspapers that it was illegal to publish the proceedings of the case that the general prosecutor has raised against Jordan Engineers Association President Leith Shbeihat.

Nothing in the Press and Publications Law, however, bars the publication of information on cases that are being tried at court and does not refer to investigations being carried out by the prosecutor general.

Article 42 of the Press and Publications Law, which Mr. Amin quoted as legal basis for his request, says: "It is prohibited to publish the minutes of cases that are being tried at courts before the issuance of the final verdict and unless the court permits that."

(Continued on page 7)



Eritreans capture disputed Red Sea island, Yemen says

SANA (Agencies) — Yemeni warplanes on Monday attacked Eritrean forces who captured a disputed Red Sea island after a three-day battle in which at least nine soldiers died, officials said.

The island was seized when the Eritreans launched a "violent attack" on Monday, shattering a ceasefire which had gone into effect at midnight, a military official said here.

They were able to take control of the island with the help of reinforcements, he said.

Yemen said it had launched a counter air attack involving Soviet-made MiG-29s to take back the island of Hanish Al Kabir, which it said was initially invaded on Friday by Eritrean forces landing by boat.

Fighter-bombers took off for the island in waves from a base near Sanaa several

hours after its fall was announced by Yemen, which vowed to take back the territory by force.

A ceasefire had been announced at dawn by Asmara Radio in Eritrea. A source close to the Yemeni government said here earlier that a truce had taken effect at midnight (2100 GMT Sunday) and that it was being respected.

Radio Asmara said presidents Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen and Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea had agreed to form a four-member committee to oversee the ceasefire: A Yemeni, an Eritrean and two U.S. military attaches.

The U.S. embassy in Sanaa said it could not confirm Americans were taking part.

The Eritrean Foreign Ministry said Monday it would release more than 180 Yemeni soldiers taken prisoner because it believed the dis-

(Continued on page 7)

Nablus sweep seen to reflect Arafat's anti-militant stand

NABLUS (Agencies) — Palestinian officials pledged Monday to crack down hard on crime and unrest in newly autonomous territories after police dismantled an armed gang which had terrorised this city for nine months.

Acting amid mounting unease in Israel over the prospect of an upsurge of cross-border crime and political violence from Palestinian-controlled zones on the West Bank, hundreds of Palestinian police arrested Ahmad Tabouk and 22 of his followers over the weekend.

Some 300 police men raided the old city in Nablus for several hours Sunday in a final push to arrest Mr. Tabouk five days after the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) took control of the city from Israeli occupation troops.

Sporadic shooting was reported during the operation but Palestinian officials said Monday that Mr. Tabouk, 31, surrendered without a fight late Sunday after being surrounded by police in his family's old city home.

(Continued on page 7)

PNA and Hamas launch dialogue

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the hardline group Hamas met here Monday to settle their differences and prevent a "new Afghanistan" of civil violence between Palestinians.

An Israeli human rights group meanwhile demanded that charges be filed against Mr. Tabouk, who is suspected of having killed at least three suspected collaborators and wounded 20.

Mr. Tabouk has been taken for questioning to PNA police headquarters in the West Bank town of Jericho. Mr. Tabouk and his gang of several dozen gunmen called themselves the Fatah Hawks and claimed they acted on behalf of Mr. Arafat's security forces. They controlled the streets of Nablus during the past few weeks, shooting in the legs

"Hamas's policy is to continue the Palestinian resistance as long as the Israeli occupation is in place," Mr. Nazzal said.

(Continued on page 7)

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On the occasion of its Thirty Second anniversary, Royal Jordanian Airline, has the pleasure to announce the introduction of a new service to facilitate the check-in process for passengers travelling to Amsterdam, New York, Chicago, London and Berlin will have the choice of obtaining their Boarding Pass as well as paying airport departure tax within 24 hours of scheduled departure time at our sales offices located in Al Abdali, Jabal Amman and Housing Bank, Commercial Centre - 1st floor.

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Setting New Standards

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U.S. team praises political shifts in Palestinian scene

AMMAN (J.T.) — An international delegation organised jointly by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Carter Centre has concluded a second pre-election mission to review the Palestinian electoral process in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. After an intense week of observation and analysis, a statement by the joint mission said, the delegation was encouraged by the emerging focus of the political discussion on democratic procedures that has occurred in recent days among groups across the political spectrum. Despite a substantially compressed timetable, the registration process seems to have gone rather well, and the prospects for an election without violence or disruption have improved over the last month, "the peace process has permitted elections; in turn, it now appears that free elections could strengthen the peace process."

The delegation includes Ambassador Harry Barnes and Dr. Robert Pastor from The Carter Centre; Dr. Alex Grigoriev, former member of the Latvian Parliament; Dr. Mohammad Guessous, leader of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces in Morocco; and Thomas O. Melia, Senior Associate at NDI. The delegation held meetings with Yasser Arafat and officials of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA); leaders of virtually all political parties and groups; journalists and human rights activists; civic leaders, domestic observers, candidates and election officials; and Israelis.

Following are major excerpts from the delegation's statement, a copy of which was sent to the Jordan Times yesterday:

Throughout the pre-election period, NDI and Carter Centre representatives based in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will continue to monitor preparations for the elections, voter and candidate registration, the campaign, political environment, media coverage of the elections, the role of security forces and voter education efforts. At the time of the elections, NDI and The Carter Centre will organise a multinational delegation of election and regional experts, elected officials, and political party leaders, led by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

The delegation was encouraged to hear Palestinian leaders, including those from Islamist groups, describe elections as the basis of political legitimacy and the key to long term stability. These leaders told us that they want the elections to proceed without disruption or violence, whether they eventually choose to participate or not. Chairman Arafat is presently engaged in a dialogue with

Egyptian actress runs afoul of lawyers for 'immoral' photo

CAIRO (AFP) — Two Muslim fundamentalist lawyers have launched legal proceedings against a well-known Egyptian actress for appearing "practically naked" in a photograph published in a film magazine.

Abdul Fatah Al Waraki and Ayman Abul Futouh told AFP on Sunday they want actress Yusra to go to prison

Islamist critics of the PNA and the Oslo accords that we hope will lead to their participation in the elections. We hope this dialogue may be expanded to other groups so as to integrate all Palestinians into a peaceful political process."

All political groups with whom the delegation spoke welcomed the presence of international observers as an essential element of these elections. This represents their recognition of the importance of a transparent and accountable electoral process and the positive role that the international community can play in reinforcing the process. We also note the importance of monitoring by impartial, civic-minded Palestinians as provided in the election law and the Interim Agreement, and we appeal to the PNA and the Central Election Commission (CEC) to facilitate their work.

The PNA needs to take immediate steps to dispel these fears and create an open environment more conducive to meaningful elections. Toward that end, we recommend the following:

— First, the Attorney General needs to respond fully to the requests of the Independent Commission on Human Rights and others for investigations of human rights violations.

— Second, the delegation recommends the establishment of a legal framework for independent radio and television and the modification of the Press Law of June 1995 to respect rather than inhibit freedom of the press and speech.

— Third, the encouraging recognition by the PNA of the need for access to the media for all candidates ought to be reinforced by timely publication and implementation of specific guidelines. It is essential that all candidates will have equitable access to the media to present their messages and that news programming by the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation will also reflect balance and fairness.

— Fourth, more broadly, PNA officials, including the security services, should take prompt steps to assure the public that the people's rights to express their views freely will not be infringed.

They are also bringing charges against the editor and two other employees of the magazine, Al Cinema Wal Nass, that published the picture.

The trial is to open Dec. 27.

Bulklist supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to rise slightly with winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northwesterly moderate and sea calm.

Min./Max. temp.: Amman 24°/14° C; Aqaba 28°/20° C.

Fair

(Source: Dara)

Dhahr

Ashra

Maghreb

Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweileh, Tel. 810734

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church, Tel. 624590.

Church of the Annunciation, Tel. 637441.

St. George Church, Tel. 61757.

Terraneus Church, Tel. 622396.

Church of the Annunciation, Tel. 623541.

Anglican Church, Tel. 632826.

Armenian Catholic Church, Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church, Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church, Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church, Tel. 632326.

Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tel. 632326.

Christian speaking Evangelical Congregation, Tel. 645457.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Tel. 634932.

Church of Nazareth, Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman, Tel. 811295.

Prayer times

05:43 Fair

06:25 (Source: Dara)

11:35 Dhahr

14:16 Ashra

16:39 Maghreb

18:02 Isha

10 PNA ministers resign ahead of elections

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Ten ministers in Yasser Arafat's 18-member cabinet have resigned in order to run in the Palestinian general elections. One of the ministers confirmed Monday.

Mr. Arafat, meanwhile, formally registered his candidacy for president, so far the only contender for the job. Two others, a businessman and a social worker, have said they would challenge Mr. Arafat, but have not yet filed out the applications.

Palestinians have two votes in the Jan. 20 elections, one to select members of the 83-seat council that will administer the West Bank and Gaza Strip and second for the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Unlike his ministers, Mr.

Ten members of Mr. Arafat's appointed cabinet submitted their resignations during a cabinet meeting Friday in the West Bank town of Nablus, but the move was only made public Monday.

Social Affairs Minister Intissar Wazir said Mr. Arafat asked her and the other nine ministers to stay on the job through Wednesday. After that, deputy ministers will be on the job through Wednesday. After that, deputy ministers will be in charge.

Mr. Arafat, sending a representative, had registered himself as candidate for president Sunday at the headquarters of the elections commission in the West Bank town of Jericho, said Abdul Nasser Mekki, director of the Jericho office.

Unlike his ministers, Mr.

Arafat was not required to resign from his post as head of the PNA in order to run.

Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement was to submit its candidates' lists for the 16 electoral districts last Thursday. However, there has been infighting over the selection of names, with local activists complaining that Mr. Arafat is trying to dictate who will run.

"The main reason for the delay is the conflict between what the people want and what the leadership wants," said Salah Tamari, a prominent Fatah member who is running in the Bethlehem district.

Mr. Arafat, sending a representative, had registered himself as candidate for president Sunday at the headquarters of the elections commission in the West Bank town of Jericho, said Abdul Nasser Mekki, director of the Jericho office.

Unlike his ministers, Mr.

Palestinians prepare for historic Christmas

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Palestinian Christians are preparing with joy their first Christmas in Bethlehem under self-rule.

"I am worried, especially in the economic area," Nasser said. "Since the beginning of the autonomy, I have seen no change. The expected Palestinian investors have not arrived."

Israeli troops are to withdraw from Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, after 28 years of occupation on Thursday as part of the accord extending Palestinian autonomy across the West Bank.

It will be the first time in history that Christmas celebrations are held in Bethlehem under Palestinian rule, and they will be attended by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"We have suffered so much under the occupation," said Hanna Nasser, the deputy mayor of Bethlehem. "The Christians represented 25 per cent of the population under British rule (in Palestine before the creation of Israel in 1948) and today number only 2.5 per cent" in the territories.

In Bethlehem itself, only 30 per cent of the Biblical town's 30,000 residents are

Christian, although they represented the overwhelming majority in 1948.

"I am worried, especially in the economic area," Nasser said. "Since the beginning of the autonomy, I have seen no change. The expected Palestinian investors have not arrived."

However, the participation of Mr. Arafat, a Muslim, in the Christmas celebrations is seen as a boost.

Mr. Nasser said Mr. Arafat's visit "will give us more confidence." Mr. Arafat's wife, Suha, is from a Christian family.

The army withdrawal is to take place three days later than scheduled so work can be finished on a bypass road to allow Jewish settlers to avoid travelling through Bethlehem, but Israel has said the delay should not affect the planned Christmas celebrations.

Mr. Nasser, himself from a Catholic family that immigrated here from Arabia four centuries ago, said Palestinian Christians have suffered an exodus over the past 40 years, mainly for economic reasons.

"There are 50,000 families from Bethlehem who have emigrated and they will not come back," he said. "About 80 per cent of them are in Latin America and the rest in North America and Australia."

"Our birthrate is also much lower than that of the Muslims," he said.

Bishara Daud, a Palestinian representative of the Greek Orthodox community in Bethlehem, said it was "the Israelis who encouraged the discrimination."

"When the Muslim fundamentalist group Hamas was formed, they tried to create, without success, a Christian equivalent, the Hamam — the Christian Resistance Movement."

Mr. Daud said he has seen no friction between Muslims and Christians in Bethlehem. The Greek Orthodox church has about 40,000 Palestinian followers, and is the oldest Christian community in the holy land.

"If there are incidents, they are personal conflicts that are misinterpreted, or political differences," said a Bethlehem inhabitant who

gave his name as Elie.

Mr. Daud said he is "first a Palestinian, then a Christian." He plans to run as a candidate in the first Palestinian general elections on January 20 to set up a self-rule council.

"I will be an independent candidate with the programme: Free our land, including Jerusalem, capital of Palestine," he said.

The elections are also important for Christians in general, who will have six seats reserved for them on the 83-member autonomy council.

"I am against these Christian seats, it is in one way the beginning of discrimination, but the moment we do not have a state, so I accept it for now," Mr. Daud said.

"There are so few of us that without these seats we would have no chance of getting an elected representative," Mr. Nasser added.

He noted, however, that Christian schools include numerous Muslim students.

"It is a guarantee of tolerance, for a long time to come," he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cyprus to court-martial soldier caught by Turkey

NICOSIA (R) — A Greek-Cypriot soldier just out of a jail in Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus will now be court-martialed by his superiors for fraternising with the enemy, defence sources said on Monday. A Defence Ministry source told Reuters George Karotsakis, 19, would appear before a military court soon to face charges of abandoning his post and fraternising with the enemy. The charges carry a maximum sentence of six months in jail. "The procedure has already started. He will be charged and court-martialed," the source said. Karotsakis, who was manning a National Guard post in a Nicosia suburb of capital Nicosia, strolled over to the Turkish sentry post opposite when he was caught. He was released a month later.

Tonnes of Taliban munitions destroyed in blast

KABUL (AFP) — A massive blast has destroyed tonnes of ammunition held by the Taliban militia at a depot southwest of the besieged Afghan capital, defence ministry sources said Monday. About 50 truckloads of rockets, tank and artillery rounds and small arms ammunition were destroyed in the explosion in Taliban-held Wardak province late Saturday, they said. No independent confirmation of the explosion was immediately available. "It was a huge stockpile of ammunition which had been destined for the Taliban fighters battling our forces around Kabul," an official said. "This constituted a significant material loss to the enemy," he added, without specifying what caused the blast.

Iraq frees Saudi national — Red Cross source

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has freed a Saudi national accused of entering the country illegally and sent him home under the auspices of the Red Cross, said a source at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Monday. "We handed him (back)... it was done yesterday (Sunday)," said a source at the ICRC's Baghdad office. Newspapers quoted a statement from Iraq's Foreign Ministry saying "the Saudi national, Hamid Inayzay Mohammad Al Utabi, was handed back to his country through the Iraqi border town of Sawaan between Iraq and Kuwait." The Foreign Ministry statement said the Saudi was released in accordance with presidential decision No. 78 issued on Sept. 14, 1995 granting pardons to all Arabs jailed in Iraq. The Foreign Ministry statement said the Saudi was serving a two-year prison sentence for entering Iraq illegally. It made no mention of when the Saudi entered the country or when his sentence began.

Turkish police seize 80 kg of heroin

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Turkish police seized 80 kilograms of pure heroin hidden in compartments of a car here at the weekend, security officials said Monday. They said eight people, all Turks, were detained in connection with the incident. The heroin was destined for Western Europe, where it would have had a market value of about \$10 million. Police in Turkey, which is on a main drugs smuggling route from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran to Europe, seized more than two tonnes of heroin last year.

Lebanese premier wins French prize

PARIS (AFP) — President Jacques Chirac awarded a prestigious French prize to Lebanese Premier Rafik Hariri on Monday for "exemplary" work in promoting his country's development. The Prix Louise Michel was bestowed on Mr. Hariri during a ceremony at Mr. Chirac's residence, the Elysee Palace, which was followed by a private lunch, the French presidential press service said. The prize was in recognition of "exemplary action for Lebanon's good, which shows in what Lebanon has achieved under your authority and your unstinting energy," said Mr. Chirac, who himself won the Prix Louise Michel in 1986.

Court bans Somali daily from N. Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — The Islamic Sharia court has banned circulation and sale of the influential daily newspaper Qaran in areas under its control in north Mogadishu, accusing it of publishing false information. The court's order, broadcast by the north Mogadishu radio on Monday, said those found selling or smuggling Qaran into north Mogadishu would be punished according to Islamic law. The ban followed the publication by the newspaper of a plane crash at Isley airport in north Mogadishu which it attributed to a mine blast, but the report was later found to be false by reporters who rushed to the scene of the alleged accident. North Mogadishu is the stronghold of self-styled Somali interim President Ali Mahdi Mohammad's Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA), a bitter political opponent of the United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USCS/NA) faction leader General Mohammad Farah Aideed, who controls south Mogadishu.

Policeman, militant chief killed in Egypt

MINYA (AFP) — A policeman and a militant chief were killed in a shootout Monday in a central square of Mallawi town, a flashpoint of extremist violence in south Egypt, police said. Ahmad Hassan Al Sayed, 23, was shot dead when three members of the Gamma Islamiyah extremist group opened fire on a group of policemen in the town, 280 kilometres south of Cairo in Minya province. Police returned fire as they pursued the fleeing militants through the town. The military head of the Gamma in Mallawi, Ismail Abdulla Ismail, was shot dead in the chase, police said. Another militant was wounded but managed to escape with his colleague into nearby sugarcane fields, which police surrounded and began searching.

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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday addresses the opening session of the 1995 International Conference on Electronics, Circuits and Systems (Petra photo)

Prince Hassan calls for addressing problems of information poverty

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday said most countries of the world were at the receiving end of development witnessed in the field of electronics.

At the opening session of the 1995 International Conference on Electronics, Circuits and Systems, Prince Hassan said the bulk of developing nations have missed out on opportunities to participate in the development process in this important field.

"It would be an understatement for us to say that it is timely for us to host such a conference in Jordan and the Middle East," Prince Hassan said.

Prince Hassan said participants in the four-day conference, who represent 39 countries, should contribute to evaluating the level of social awareness and the importance of accessibility to information.

"It is not just a question of carrying new toys, some of which look like pieces of modern furniture, but it is a qualitative step towards enhancing the process of

accountability for decision-making at various levels of society. It is a process of increasing cultural interaction among society through trans-border data information flow, within the context of the global village, once again, that quality of internationalisation. We are, in associating ourselves and participating in the information age, contributing to global information transfer," he said.

The Crown Prince said there was uneven distribution of information resources between developed and developing countries, describing this as information poverty, which is manifested in phenomena such as planning without facts, unreliable information on economic and social issues and lack of decisive support information.

He said as a result the use of advanced technologies for better management to stimulate economic growth mainly resides in the foreseeable future in the developing world.

"The poverty line in Jordan is recognised by the

international community, and yet every few months a politician decides to re-adjust the benchmark for the poverty line, and I wonder how we can address the subject of global idiom, investment, economic interdependence with this arbitrary performance," the Crown Prince said.

The four-day conference is organised by the Higher Council of Science and Technology in cooperation with New York City University and City College.

Participants in the conference, numbering 300, will present 142 working papers dealing with the latest developments in computer sciences, information technology and artificial intelligence among a host of other related fields.

On the sidelines of the conference, 10 scientific workshops will be held, at the National Data Centre, the Royal Scientific Society, the Jordan Electricity Authority and the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation.

Anti-nuclear activist arrives in Amman with message of support for King

AMMAN (J.T.) — Ulrich Gottstein, a member of the Board of Directors of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), arrived in Amman Monday to present a letter of gratitude to His Majesty King Hussein for his efforts and support of nuclear disarmament.

Dr. Gottstein, a professor of medicine in Germany, told the Jordan Times that "among those who supported the ideas of IPPNW was King Hussein... [who] always supported the idea of nuclear weapon-free zones, especially in the

Middle East."

The IPPNW, a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985, is a non-partisan organisation which aims to educate people as well as politicians about the dangers of nuclear weapons.

The organisation has 200,000 member physicians worldwide, of which 146 are Jordanian. Egypt, Palestine, and Israel are also members. The IPPNW adheres to the principles of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was ratified in 1970.

PSD celebrates Arab police day

Royal Decree promotes senior officers

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was Monday issued approving the promotion of several senior Public Security Department (PSD) officers.

The decree approved the promotion of Brigadier Abdul Karim Tarawneh, Brigadier Abdul Hameed Isheid and Brigadier Adel Armuti to the rank of major-general.

PSD Director Lieutenant-General Abdul Rahman Al Adwan decorated the officers with their new ranks at a special ceremony at his office Monday morning.

The ceremony, which coincided with the PSD's celebrations of the Arab Police Day, was attended by Commander of the Badia and Border Guard Force Major-General Fawaz Ben Zaben and senior PSD officers.

Later Monday, Lt.-Gen. Adwan attended the PSD's celebration of the

Arab Police Day held at the PSD Officers' Club.

At the celebration, several retired PSD personnel and families of policemen killed on duty were honoured in appreciation of their outstanding efforts in serving the department and national security.

Retired Major-General Fahed Gharaibeh delivered an address on behalf of the PSD's ex-servicemen, and paid tribute to the role of the department in preserving security and stability.

PSD Deputy Director for Traffic Affairs Major General Ibrahim Sariyah delivered another address in which he voiced pride in the role of the PSD at the national and international levels, highlighting the role of the department in peace-keeping operations in various parts of the world.

He said the PSD's responsibilities expanded in the peace era when the number of tourists visiting

the Kingdom increased tangibly.

This added to the burdens shouldered by the PSD which had to create new departments and sections such as the tourist police force and the force operating at crossing points between Jordan and Israel.

He added that other crimes emerged as the Kingdom embarked on the democratisation process, saying some people abuse democracy and the freedom of expression.

"Some ill-minded people abused the freedom of expression, believing it means the freedom to slander and defamation," he said.

On the sidelines of the celebration, which included several poetry recitals, Lt.-Gen. Adwan opened a new gymnasium at the officers' club.

Dead Sea developers say JVA leasing terms lacking incentives, burdensome

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Contracts for four major hotels on the Dead Sea will not be signed this month as originally planned after investors said this week that they will be asking for an extension to consider the terms of leasing being proposed by the Jordan Valley Authority.

The four hotels—initiatives of two Jordanian investment groups, two Jordanian investors and foreign hotel companies ACCOR and Marriott—are to be built on state land near the Dead Sea Spa Hotel, Jordan's only existing hotel along the Dead Sea shore.

Their total cost is estimated at \$280 million.

Officials in late November said they expected the contracts to be signed before the close of last month, but investors, unhappy about the terms,

have not yet signed contracts and are hoping that the government will reconsider its terms.

"We are asking that the government give us until after the new year to make a decision," said Khalil Talhouni, head of Zara Investments, whose company is planning a tourist village on the northern shore of the Dead Sea.

Investors said they want to consult further with other investors and lenders after they found the terms of the proposed lease to be burdensome.

Among their main concerns are stipulations in the lease agreement that investors provide their own infrastructure, including water and electricity, and that rent is paid in advance in five-year installments for the 30-year leasing period, and that the agreement does not allow for a grace period during which to design and

build.

Ziad Salah, representing the French hotel group ACCOR, which is planning to build hotels at the Dead Sea, Aqaba, Petra and Amman, said that these terms are unacceptable to the group of investors since the government, as a minimum incentive to private investors, should provide the necessary infrastructure.

"These terms are just not feasible for us," he said. "When a (hotel) room is occupied, it requires two cubic metres of water—can you tell me from where and how are we going to bring that water, among other things?"

Also, he said, it is standard that lessors give a grace period once the lessee comes into possession of the land, for designing and building, while he also criticised the leasing period as being too short.

"In a hotel, you don't even start to make money until after at least 20 years," he added, pointing out that in Israel, the length of lease is usually at least 50 years.

The four hotels at the Dead Sea would add some 1,600 rooms to the area (and would employ some 5,000-6,000 people according to Mr. Salah), but the rooms are still fewer than the 2,000 that already exist in Israel—which is already planning for major expansion. Under terms such as these, investors are concerned that they will not be able to compete.

"If we are talking about tourism development seriously," said Mr. Talhouni, "the government should look at changing some of these ideas. We would like to show (the government) what sort of incentives are being offered to our (Israeli) neighbours," Mr. Talhouni added.

The Israeli government gives a subsidy to private investors at 28 per cent of the cost of the hotel, Mr. Salah said, in addition to providing infrastructure, which is usually a given.

"The government in Israel gives assistance," Mr. Salah said. "Here, we are starting with negatives."

The four intend to submit an official request to extend the period in which they consider the terms of the lease, and Mr. Talhouni said he is optimistic that the government would reconsider its terms as well.

"We've yet to propose anything (to the government)," he said, "but it's my feeling that they are prepared to discuss and negotiate."

A source at the department of the Jordan Valley Authority overseeing the development of the area would not comment on the issue.

Swiss team to donate technical training aid

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) and a Swiss contact team Monday signed the minutes of their meetings over the past two weeks covering talks on Swiss technical aid to Jordan's vocational training centres.

The signing of the minutes followed visits to vocational training centres in Irbid, Mashare, Hama, Aqaba and Sahab by a team from the Swiss group to study their needs of equipment to be purchased through a JD 1.06 million Swiss donation to Jordan.

The equipment will serve trades such as electricity, auto-body welding, carpentry, air-conditioning, refrigeration and metal-casting, Mr. Nasrallah told the Jordan Times. The team of experts had conducted a survey of these centres and had studied instructor

needs for various trades, said Ali Nasrallah, VTC director general who signed the minutes with Swiss ambassador Gian Federico Bedotti.

The minutes provide for steps to be taken in the process of purchasing the equipment which will take place within five months, Mr. Nasrallah said.

Modern equipment will modernise training methods, enabling the VTC to provide training required for the labour market, Mr. Nasrallah said. He added that the VTC is currently undertaking a comprehensive revision of its training programmes following a Council of Minister's decision to this effect.

The VTC's revision includes classifying various trades and setting job descriptions, he said.

Amman to host Arab-African parliamentary conference

AMMAN (Petra) — Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'ed Hayel Srour met with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday to discuss arrangements for next month's eighth Arab-African parliamentary conference in Amman.

The prime minister underlined the importance of this conference, saying it should strengthen Arab-African parliamentary ties, Mr. Srour said.

The two-day meeting, which starts on Jan. 8, is an opportunity to promote bilateral cooperation and dialogue for the benefit of

Arab and African countries, Mr. Srour said.

Mr. Srour, who will chair the conference, said invitations have been sent out to Arab and African countries, the Arab League, the Organisation of African States and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The agenda of the conference will cover the role of Arab and African parliaments in helping defuse existing disputes between African and Arab nations, Afro-Arab cooperation in a Middle East and Africa nuclear free zone, and the liberation of trade between Arab and African nations.

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Monday awarded the National Oil Company (NOC) a 50-year concession to prospect for oil and natural gas in the Kingdom.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Samih Darwazeh, who signed the deal with the NOC's board chairman Rajab Sa'ad, said the concession allows the company to conduct seismological and geophysical as well as aerial surveys in the course of its exploration.

Speaking following the signing ceremony held at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Mr. Darwazeh said the renewable deal allows for the exploration of oil and gas in a specific region located in north-east and east of the Kingdom.

Mr. Darwazeh added that extracted oil will be marketed on commercial basis.

According to the minister, the company will drill wells, set up storage facilities for oil and appropriate land for use by the company.

He said the company and the Jordanian government will share the returns of oil and gas sales. Mr. Darwazeh also said the NOC will submit a bi-annual report to the ministry of energy and mineral resources on its activities and plans.

The NOC, which came into being in July this year with a JD 20 million capital, will conduct operations at the Rishieh district to produce more gas mainly for use in electric power generation, according to the minister.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Energy said Monday a team representing the American oil company, Anadarko, has arrived in Amman for talks at the Natural Resources Authority on oil and gas prospecting in Jordan.

Mr. Darwazeh said several American firms have already expressed willingness to sign profit-sharing agreements for oil prospecting with Jordan.

He said Anadarko has tentatively agreed to invest \$20 million in its operations.

Oil company receives 50-year prospecting concession

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The total number of citizens benefiting from NOC services was 789,876 of whom 73.8 per cent are Jordanians according to Dr. Touqan. He added that the services covered compensation to beneficiaries for death and occupational injuries and pension benefits to senior citizens.

Dr. Touqan said the corporation's investments are in banks, real estate, hotels, tourist installations, housing projects and others, which yielded JD 80.6 million in profits between Sept. of last year and Sept. 1995.

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SSC director outlines corporation services

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) which established in 1980, has to date provided services and benefits to citizens employed by a total of 10,330 firms and organisations in Jordan, according to Safwan Touqan, the corporation's director general.

Dr. Touqan was addressing the chairman and members of the Legal Committee of the Lower House of Parliament to whom he outlined SSC services and achievements over the past 16 years.

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Gingrich chosen Time's 1995 Man of the Year

NEW YORK (AFP) — Newt Gingrich, the fiery and controversial speaker of the Republican-led House of Representatives, has been chosen 1995's Man of the Year by Time magazine.

Widely credited with engineering the 1994 electoral coup that saw the Republicans retake the House from the Democrats for the first time in 40 years, Mr. Gingrich has "changed the language and substance of American politics," Time said.

Despised by the Democrats he defeated, Mr. Gingrich finds himself on the cover of Time at a bitter-sweet moment.

Just as the Republican goal of a balanced budget within seven years is within reach, the speaker has recently become the subject of a tax-fraud investigation, and his approval ratings are below 30 per cent according to some polls.

Mr. Gingrich has denied any wrongdoing, but Democrats are hoping a special prosecutor designat-

ed earlier this month by the House Ethics Committee will look beyond accusations that he allegedly misused tax-free contributions to fund a college course he taught in his southern state of Georgia.

It would be no small irony if the charges bring him down. After all, it was Mr. Gingrich who brought down Democratic House Speaker Jim Wright in a cloud of ethical controversy in 1989 — the first speaker in U.S. history to resign.

As Time cautions, however, Mr. Gingrich, 52, has managed to pull off several rebirths in a career that began 20 years ago.

Only on the third try did he win his Georgia congressional seat in 1978, and his successful campaign against a tax hike supported by President George Bush in 1990 nearly cost him his incumbency.

Charismatic, colourful and nearly always controversial, Mr. Gingrich was the brainchild behind the so-called Contract With

America — the 100-day Republican agenda calling for a dramatic scaleback of the federal bureaucracy created largely by Democratic presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson.

He crafted the plan even though few political analysts predicted the House would go Republican in 1994, and his convictions earned him the respect and loyalty of the troops in the "Republican revolution" he led.

Prone to speak in superlative terms laden with references to the information age, Mr. Gingrich once said all poor people should be given a laptop computer.

More recently, he not-so-subtly suggested that he allowed the government to partially shut down in a budget fight with the White House because President Bill Clinton made him sit on the back of Air Force One on a flight to attend the funeral of slain Israeli leader Yitzak Rabin.

But above all, Mr. Gingrich — who recently

ended speculation about a possible presidential run — has become the central ideological power in the U.S. Congress, and has done more to shape the raging debate about the role of the federal government than any other leader.

"Gingrich is our 1995 Man of the Year because his rise and fall were emblematic of an historic shift in Washington that will be felt for generations to come," Time said in a statement released Sunday, a day before its special year-end issue hits newsstands.

"For better or worse, he has changed the language and substance of American politics," said the magazine's Managing Editor James Gaines. "Perhaps like no other politician in recent history."

For at least a generation, Time predicted, no president is likely to propose spending more than the government earns, or expanding what it attempts to do.

Indonesia-Australia sign security pact

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia signed a historic security agreement with Australia Monday, which both sides see easing mutual suspicion while boosting military cooperation between the large but diverse neighbours.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and his Australian counterpart Gareth Evans signed the pact in the presence of President Suharto and Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating.

"This is a statement which makes clear what our strategic intentions are towards one another," Mr. Keating said. "It must do a lot to reduce suspicions in both countries of both countries," he told a news conference.

The agreement follows decades of unease between two countries whose troops clashed in the jungles of Borneo in the early 1960s.

Indonesian State Secretary Mardiono told reporters Mr. Suharto had told Mr. Keating he hoped the agreement would eliminate doubt in Australia about Jakarta's intentions.

"If it cannot be abolished, it is expected this agreement can reduce the doubt," Mr. Mardiono quoted Mr. Suharto as saying.

Mr. Mardiono quoted Mr.

Suharto as saying the agreement was important for security and stability in the region as well as for the economic development and prosperity of both countries.

"What it does is give full expression to the kind of relationship I believe we should have always had with Indonesia and it is a declaration of trust and cooperation on both our parts," Mr. Keating told General John Baker.

Mr. Keating, on his fifth visit to Indonesia since becoming prime minister in 1991, was in Jakarta with a high-powered delegation, including Deputy Prime Minister Kim Beazley, Defence Minister Robert Ray and armed forces chief General John Baker.

The agreement commits the two countries to consult regularly on common security and challenges, as well as to promote security cooperation.

The two diverse but strong neighbours control land masses among the biggest in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mainly-Muslim Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation with about 193 million people, has been ruled with a firm hand by retired General Suharto since the late 1960s.

Australia, a member of

the Commonwealth, has about 18 million people.

Both nations said the agreement would boost already growing defence ties between the nations' armed forces.

"It is essentially a green light to defence forces that more can be done," Mr. Keating said.

Indonesian paratroopers took part in Australia's annual multinational war games for the first time this year, despite protests from groups supporting East Timor independence.

Last week's announcement that the agreement would be signed Monday after 18 months of secret negotiations received applause and condemnation in Australia.

East Timorese activists in Australia condemned it as a sellout but some analysts said it was a sign of maturing relations.

If it had been a more public process, there probably would not have been a treaty," Mr. Keating said.

Indonesia invaded East Timor, 480 kilometres from Australia, in 1975 and annexed it in the following year.

Among Western nations, only Australia recognises its sovereignty over the troubled former Portuguese colony.

Mr. Yeltsin had appealed to the nation Friday to turn out in large numbers to prevent a return to the hardline past just four years after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

But even the prospect of big Communist gains in the State Duma (lower house) did not seem to shock or upset his aides.

Two of his aides, Mark Urnov and political adviser Georgy Satarov, welcomed the relatively high turnout and took early signs of Communist gains in their stride.

"This high turnout shows people value elections and democracy," said Mr. Urnov, head of the Presidential Analytical Centre, although he had hoped the turnout would reach 60 per cent. It appeared to be slightly lower, at about 56 per cent.

Judgments and predictions of the results were

hard to make even by dawn in Moscow, more than nine hours after the last polling stations had closed. The Central Electoral Commission fell far behind its own schedule for announcing results.

"Even those citizens who voted for those parties and movements whose ideology and mentality are not inclined towards democracy and elections agree that power can and must change, not through coups and shooting, but by elections."

"It is a very good thing simply that this election took place and was valid. There were some doubts that it would be cancelled or postponed," political commentator Leonid Radzhikovskiy said in a television interview.

"But this is a civilised process, after all, and I think that our citizens have acquired the reflex that elections are more convenient than a fight and sorting things out with mandates is more productive, cheaper and brings less bloodshed than doing it

Arms body holds crucial talks with Sinn Fein

DUBLIN (R) — An international panel aiming to boost a fragile Northern Ireland peace through guerrilla disarmament held crucial talks Monday with Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA), which halted a war against British rule 16 months ago, refuses to comply with London's demand that its weapons be scrapped to secure a place for Sinn Fein at all-party talks.

Pro-British Protestant guerrillas, operating a matching truce, also rule out an arms handover.

Sinn Fein said before

meeting members of the U.S.-backed disarmament panel at Dublin Castle that any moves to "decommission" arms must include the weaponry of British forces and their Protestant "Unionist" supporters.

Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein president, demanding Britain drop its arms-before-talks condition, said: "All of the weapons in the situation must be taken out of it... We need, all of us, to come together to talk about the future.

"Guns have been silenced. We need to use that opportunity to... bring about democratisation and to talk about the amount of constitutional and political change which is required to underpin these cessations."

Britain and Ireland established the so-called "international body," headed by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, after a months-long stalemate on the arms question threatened to derail the peace secured by guerrilla truces.

British ministers insist

IRA disarmament is vital to

reassure the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland that a bloody campaign on their "union" with Britain is finally over.

Sinn Fein says Britain

introduced the precondition

after the IRA called off

its 25-year war to oust

British forces in September

1994, to humiliate the

guerrillas and woo vital

votes from Protestant legis-

lators in the British parlia-

ment.

"No-one really expects

the British to decommission

their weapons but we

would expect them to take

their armed forces back

into their own country,"

Mr. Adams told Irish Radio.



Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky raises his arms in Jubilation in his Social Democratic Party's headquarters in Vienna after winning 38.32 per cent of the vote in the general elections (AFP photo)

Austrian leaders mull future after elections; right licks wounds

VIENNA (R) — Austrian leaders met their top party officials Monday to reflect on the results of Sunday's snap general election and to map out strategy ahead of talks to form a new coalition government.

Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, whose Social Democrats won their best election result since 1990 with 38.3 per cent of the vote, said before meeting his party chiefs that voters had clearly rejected a sharp swing to the right.

The results of the general election Sunday indicated a clear "no" by the Austrian people to co-operation between the (conservative) People's Party (OVP) and the (far-right) Freedom Party," Mr. Vranitzky told Austria Radio International.

Joerg Haider's anti-immigration Freedom Party lost around 1,300 votes nationwide and one seat in parliament, reducing its total of deputies to 41 in the 183-member parliament.

The result was a blow to the party which had campaigned hard on a law and order platform, blaming illegal immigrants for a rise in Austria's crime rate. It was the first electoral defeat for Mr. Haider since he took

control of the party in 1986.

Mr. Haider, glossing over the slip in support, said the outcome of the election was proof that his former success was not based on a protest vote.

Mr. Vranitzky, barely able to conceal his glee at halting a 16-year erosion of support for the left, said the election showed voters had backed a gentler approach to cutting Austria's huge budget deficit — a task they failed to achieve during six weeks of talks up to Oct. 12.

The prospect of budget negotiations dragging on until the end of January unsettled investors.

"A Socialist victory has never been good for the markets," one bond trader said. "Because of this result, a lot of things have become much, much more difficult than people imagined."

Some traders warned a weakened conservative party could make cutting the deficit more problematic and put membership in a future European Currency Union at risk.

"The coming weeks will be decisive and the market will be watching for every headline," said Roman Eisenschenk, a trader with Deutsche Bank in Vienna.

TOKYO (AFP) — Aum Supreme Truth guru Shoko Asahara was branded a "devil" Monday by a former cult cadre who said he wanted to kill Asahara for inspiring a nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway and other terror assaults.

"I have been deceived by Asahara, Asahara is a devil among devils. He is a fraud. I might as well kill him," Masashi Mitsuiki, 44, told a court in Nagoya, central Japan.

"Aum's teachings are all wrong. An organisation like this should be eradicated from the world," he said during the second hearing of his trial.

Mr. Mitsuiki, a member of the yoga-practising cult since its founding in 1986, has been charged with illegally withdrawing post-office savings deposited by the mother of an Aum member after she was abducted by the sect.

Aum, at its apogee, claimed to have

10,000

followers at home and 30,000 in Russia before a police crackdown that followed the March 20 subway massacre, in which 11 were killed and some 5,500 injured.

Meanwhile, Seiichi Endo, 35, Aum's former "health and welfare minister," pleaded guilty to producing stimulants and hallucinogenic drugs, including LSD and Mescaline, for use during the cult's religious rites.

"I knew that it was illegal but I blindly followed it for the sake of the cause, in that we would undergo apprenticeship under the guru," Mr. Endo told the second hearing of his case at the Tokyo District Court.

Mr. Endo has been charged with various crimes including production of banned drugs, the subway atrocity and another nerve-gas attack in the old castle town of Matsumoto in June 1994.

Keating commission to target rogue states in anti-nuclear campaign

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia will target rogue states and terrorist groups in its campaign for a global ban on nuclear weapons, Australia's ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Butler, said Monday.

Mr. Butler, who will head a high-profile Australian commission aimed at rid-

ing the world of nuclear weapons, told reporters in Canberra it was crucial to convince nuclear states that their security would be maintained without nuclear weapons.

"That leads, naturally, to

rogue states, because it

would be a bitter irony

indeed if those who had

these weapons got rid of

them in the name of humanity,

only to find that they

were then threatened by

rogue states or terrorist

groups who had in a clandes-

tine way acquired nuclear

weapons or even nuclear

briefcase-type capabili-

ties," Mr. Butler said.

A central part of the com-

mission's report "will be

rogue states, terrorist

groups, extra-systemic

acquisition of nuclear

explosive capability."

"It would be folly to ask



Russian soldiers fix hand-grenades along the road to the town of Urus-Martan, in Chechenya, where some fighting between Russian army and Chechen separatist fighters were reported (AFP photo)

Russians and Chechens battle for fifth day

MOSCOW (R) — Russian forces battled Chechen rebels in the region's second city, Gudermes, Monday in a fifth day of fighting linked to Russia's parliamentary election, Interfax News Agency said.

Russian troops stranded in the buildings of a military headquarters and a railway station in Gudermes were surrounded by the rebels and again under heavy fire, Interfax said, quoting the Russian military command in Chechenya.

Interfax said that in the last 24 hours three Russian soldiers had been wounded in 29 rebel attacks on Russian positions. Most of the attacks were in the capital Grozny.

A military spokesman also told Interfax a group of 100 rebels had tried to break through Russian positions near the village of Urus-

Martan Sunday night.

Some of them had been killed during 50 minutes of heavy fighting, he said without mentioning Russian casualties. There was no independent word from Chechenya on the latest fighting.

Rebels opposing Russian efforts to stage local elections and the national parliamentary vote in Chechenya infiltrated Gudermes Thursday, Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov has said.

32 soldiers were killed and 41 wounded Thursday in Gudermes, but other reports suggested heavier Russian losses.

The city, 30 kilometers east of Grozny, is sealed off by Russian troops and reporters are barred from approaching it.

On Sunday, Russian officials claimed a big election victory for their preferred

candidate to head Chechenya but journalists in the region cast doubt on the way the vote was staged.

Moscow billed the vote as the only alternative to more bloodshed but their early start Thursday brought a flare-up in fighting which critics say can only get worse.

President Boris Yeltsin's Chief of Staff Sergei Filatov told ITAR-TASS news agency Doku Zavgayev had won 85 to 90 per cent of the vote for regional leader.

Official turnout figures ranged from 50 to 70 per cent, although journalists on the ground saw little evidence of voting.

In Grozny, fires, bomb attacks and intimidation by rebels meant many polling stations had not even opened. The main polling station in Grozny was not busy.

Residents complained that voter lists drawn up by the Moscow-backed authorities missed out huge chunks of the electorate. Officials handed out sheaves of ballot papers, lured people with meat and went around door to door to collect votes.

Mr. Zavgayev's main competitor had pulled out of the poll saying it was a fraud and international observers and peace brokers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe stayed away.

Mr. Filatov said Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's Our Home Is Russia party was leading the race for the region's parliamentary seat with about 50 per cent.

Our Home was credited with 9.5 per cent of the nationwide vote in early results.

New S. Korean premier urges break from past

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's new prime minister took office Monday with a call for reform in order to "put history to rights" and to root out the legacy of corruption under military-backed rule.

Speaking to a gathering of government officials after parliament approved his appointment by an overwhelming majority, legal scholar Lee Soo-Sung urged support for his mission to banish a discredited system.

"Putting history to rights is a starting point towards correcting our mistakes of the past and opening up a new era in which justice and love flow like a river," Mr. Lee said.

The appointment of Mr. Lee, president of Seoul National University, marked the first step in an effort by beleaguered President Kim Young-Sam to distance his administration from a corruption scandal that has engulfed two of his predecessors.

Mr. Lee took office hours after disgraced former President Roh Tae-Woo appeared in court with eight business moguls and six others to face charges of accepting \$369 million in bribes during Mr. Roh's tenure.

Mr. Roh's predecessor Chun Doo Hwan is also in detention and is expected to be charged with corruption and with masterminding a 1979 coup that led to an army massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in the city of Kwangju.

By selecting Mr. Lee, a respected legal scholar from South Korea's most distinguished university, Mr. Kim was seen as promoting the rule of law in a country where business and political elites have traditionally acted in sleazy collusion.

But South Korean analysts were skeptical whether Mr. Kim could solve his problems by naming a political novice as prime minister, a largely figurehead post.

under the country's presidential system.

They dismissed cabinet reshuffles as Mr. Kim's reflexive response to political trouble.

"This is Kim Young-Sam's fifth prime minister," said a Western diplomat. "He's getting careless."

In separate comments reported by local media, Mr. Lee suggested he did not expect to last long.

"I don't have plans to serve as premier for long, nor do I have prospects of staying there for long," Yonhap News Agency quoted the incoming prime minister as telling a gathering of university administrators Monday.

On Sunday Mr. Lee met Mr. Kim and urged him to make a thorough house-cleaning to curb the influence of conservatives who served under Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, Yonhap said.

He told Mr. Kim to fill the 21-member cabinet with "young, fresh and reform-minded people" and urged the president to toss out ministers who disagreed with his policies, the agency reported.

In his speech Monday Mr. Lee called on the government to "go beyond merely settling accounts with individual persons and boldly reform bad systems and practices".

Local media have reported that outgoing Prime Minister Lee Hong-Koo was replaced to enable him to stand as a star candidate for the ruling party in general elections next April.

Political analysts said this indicated that the reshuffle was as much political manoeuvring as house-cleaning.

Lee Hong-Koo will reportedly be deployed to mend political fences in the southeastern city of Taegu, home base of Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, where voters are angered by Mr. Kim's rough handling of the region's most famous sons.

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Poll: Canadians snowed under by pessimism

TORONTO (AFP) — Canadians are more pessimistic than ever about their future, according to a survey by the newsweekly MacLean's and CBC Television released Sunday.

One Canadian in three polled said the country would not exist in its current confederate form in 2000, but the figure was 50 per cent for residents of the mostly French-speaking province of Quebec.

Among Quebecers surveyed, 60 per cent said that if a new vote on independence for the province were held within the next five years, Quebec would break

away from Canada.

Pro-sovereignty (independence) forces lost a referendum on separating from Canada on Oct. 30 by a razor-thin margin of less than one per cent.

The survey of 1,610 Canadians Nov. 9-15 by strategic counsel found there was a yawning gap between Quebecers and all other Canadians on Quebec's demand for the right to veto future constitutional changes.

One third of Canadians said they feared their living standards would decline in the coming years, and more than half said conditions for senior citizens would become increasingly difficult.

Quebec saw the idea — viewed by many as possibly crucial to keeping Quebec in Canada — as necessary.

About 66 per cent of those polled believed the federal government should put the debate on Canadian unity on hold for a while, but more than 70 per cent said constitutional changes still would be necessary to show Quebec that federalism could evolve.

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9 suspected Khmer Rouge charged in terrorist plot

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Nine suspected Khmer Rouge terrorists Monday were formally charged with criminal conspiracy and membership in the outlawed guerrilla group, police and court sources said.

The nine, including one woman, were allegedly planning to destabilise the government and create instability by throwing grenades at political party offices and foreign embassies, they said.

"They have been charged with organising crimes against the royal government of Cambodia and also (under) the Khmer Rouge law," said an official at Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

"They are being charged as being members of the Khmer Rouge," the official said.

Authorities confiscated five grenades and a large number

of anti-government leaflets, police said, adding that the leaflets called for soldiers to defect to the Khmer Rouge.

Seven of the suspects were arrested last Tuesday and Wednesday and two of them were arrested Saturday, police said.

"They would have committed sabotage and created political turmoil if they had succeeded in their operation," a senior Interior Ministry official said after the first arrests last week.

A conviction under the anti-Khmer Rouge law carries a penalty of one to five years in prison while a conviction for criminal conspiracy brings a penalty of three to 15 years in prison.

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Sri Lanka stops wages to lure back Jaffna refugees

VAVUNIYA, Sri Lanka (R)

— Sri Lankan authorities have stopped the pay of state employees in the north of the island in a bid to force refugees, caught in a tug of war between the government and Tamil guerrillas, to return home.

"The authorities have asked the government agent in Jaffna to stop all payments to government servants like pensioners," an official said in the northern town of Vavuniya.

He said the move reflected the government's determination to compel Tamil residents, who were forced by the rebels to flee their northern Jaffna stronghold before it fell to government troops in early December, to return to the town.

As a result of the pay halt, refugees faced the prospect of running out of money if they failed to return.

Western aid agencies say at least 200,000 people fled from the Jaffna peninsula to avoid the fighting. They say the rebels are resettling the refugees on the northern mainland known as the Vanni, across the Jaffna Lagoon.

The Liberation Tigers Of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels say they will not allow the refugees to return as long as the army occupies Jaffna town, spiritual capital of the homeland they are fighting

for in the island's north and east.

More than 50,000 people have died in the war since 1983.

The government, eager to win hearts and minds, wants families to return to homes in Jaffna, where a major rebuilding operation is under way. Masons, carpenters, cement and roofing tiles are being shipped to the north.

Jaffna residents who arrived in this frontline town, bordering the Vanni, said banks in the region faced a liquidity crisis as the money circulation had dropped.

"People are finding it very difficult to manage their daily needs," said a resident.

"Banks depend on deposits to pay customers' cheques but nowadays people are not depositing money."

Money lenders were making a killing by charging up to 40 per cent commission to cash cheques, he said.

The statement says that going over and living in government areas would undermine the cause of the Tamil struggle," a traveller said to a Colombo-controlled town of Vavuniya.

Tamil sources and newspapers here say many Tamils in LTTE areas were trying to migrate to government-held territory, worrying the Tigers.

"There is discontent among the refugees from Jaffna," said Dharmalingam Siddharthan, a Tamil MP.

"Those who had houses and other amenities find it tough to lead the life of a refugee."

The state-run Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation said last week that Tamils attacked a local LTTE office in Jaffna's Vadamarachchi region with stones after being refused permission to go to the Colombo-controlled town of Vavuniya.

Tamils living in the LTTE zone have to get "visas" from the rebels to travel to other parts of Sri Lanka.

The LTTE says the Jaffna Tamils were beginning to lead a normal life at Vanni mainland and that it has helped build thousands of houses for the mass of refugees.

civilians in the Jaffna peninsula were leaving their homes and heading south for the Vanni mainland despite a government request for those who had already left to return.

The LTTE says more than 230,000 people have crossed from Jaffna to the mainland by boats, while thousands more are still waiting in rebel-held parts of Jaffna peninsula for transport.

Tamil sources and newspapers here say many Tamils in LTTE areas were trying to migrate to government-held territory, worrying the Tigers.

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Duality on delicate scale

POPE JOHN PAUL II inched closer than ever to recognising Israeli grip on Jerusalem when he was quoted as telling the widow of the late Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin last week that the Vatican viewed Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state. True the Pope also said that the Holy City has a dual character, one being the capital of Israel and the other as the capital of the three monotheistic faiths. Yet on closer look this acceptance of the dual importance of Jerusalem lacks balance. Recognising the religious significance of the city to Muslims and Christians is not comparable to accepting it as the political capital of the state of Israel.

For starters, the formulation excludes Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian people at a time when there is a mounting chorus of international opinion, including Israeli, which calls for East Jerusalem to be the capital of a Palestinian state. Secondly, the determination of the future status of Jerusalem was deliberately postponed by the concerned parties until the very end of the peace process due to its complexity and the conflicting claims to it. This is not to mention that the entire issue is so emotionally charged that not even, or especially, the Pope should talk about it now.

Equally relevant is the proposition that there are in fact two Jerusalems, one in the West and the other in the East. There are many ingenious ways to reconcile the different claims to the city that have yet to be fully explored. Pronouncements on Jerusalem as of now, particularly by the Holy See, that may aim to seal its future one way or another could be prejudicial to the future negotiations on its status. We may take comfort from the fact that the Vatican has effectively issued a disclaimer of what Mrs. Rabin said. But unless the Pope actually says otherwise we would continue to believe that there has been a shift in the Vatican's official stand on Jerusalem. Until the Palestinians and Israelis begin the search for a solution that is fair to all sides, politically and religiously, neither the Pope nor anybody else should prejudice the status and future of Jerusalem.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i daily Monday said that the government has to do something in the face of rising prices and poverty that have been plaguing the majority of the Jordanian people. We are face to face with a national issue called poverty, coupled with the rise in prices of most basic commodities, some of which have risen in price by at least 50 per cent this year, said Tareq Masa'weh. He said that as long as the income of most citizens remain very limited, the ordinary people will continue to face hardships and they patiently await some form of government intervention that can take the form of fixing prices and bridling the greediness of the irresponsible merchants. The writer said that the government should fix the minimum wages paid to workers, stop the continual flow of non-Jordanian workers into the country, draw up a national health insurance scheme covering all citizens and force the smokers who spent at least JD 20 a month on smoking to contribute more to the health insurance scheme. He said it is good that the government is offering incentives and privileges to foreign firms and investors to attract capital needed for development, but it is equally important for the government to give due attention to the Jordanian people's basic needs.

A WRITER in Al Ra'i lauded a decision by the Syrian government to release all detainees of Muslim Brotherhood members, calling it a necessary step to help enhance national unity at a time when Damascus is facing mounting pressures by forces trying to reshape the Middle East's order. Bassam Emoush, who is also an Islamic Action Front member of the Lower House of Parliament, said that Syria is in need of a strong domestic front, which he said could be achieved through the contribution of the Muslim Brotherhood who would never spare any effort towards serving their country and their nation. He said that close cooperation between governments and people in the current stage is a must if the nation's interests are to be safe guarded. The release of the detainees, said the writer, is bound to remove lingering mistrust and pave the way for a united front in the face of pressures and challenges in the coming stage.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khoury

Where holy books and happy electronics meet

IF A SINGLE incident can summarise the global contest now underway between different concepts of civilisation, cultural values and human identity, it might be the following incident that I personally experienced a few weeks ago. While walking through one of the most important official complexes in Jordan, I walked past two different soldiers who were on duty indoors, in a capacity as much ceremonial as a real line of defence. The first one, standing upright with his rifle ready for action should catastrophe strike, was reading a small Koran. The second soldier, sitting on a chair with his armament equally ready to protect the realm should the need arise, was playing with a Game Boy (the hand-held Japanese electronic game that is so popular with children around the world, especially in the industrialised West). I continued on my way — rather dazzled by this extraordinary juxtaposition of two uniformed and armed protectors of my state and society, one with a Koran, the other with a Game Boy.

What does this mean? I have been asking myself ever since. Was this truly some microcosm of the cosmic battle for our soul and our future that I witnessed, or nothing more meaningful than two ordinary fellows with rather different ideas about how to use available time? So strong was the dual symbolism of juxtaposed Koran and Game Boy — one of ancient, righteous morality, the other of rampant, materialistic post-modernism — that I figured this had to be a slightly profound moment of revelation, if not about our future directions and identities, than at least about our current inclinations and options. Was our future to be defined by the comforting dictates of morality and religious humanism, or by the happy electronic passion of addictive and perpetual gaming?

As I have pondered this, it has caused me to think back also on another recent event in my life that was less startling but just as culturally memorable and intellectually provocative. This was a conference in Washington that I was privileged to participate in, and whose deliberations, in retrospect, touched on the same issue that was raised by the Koran/Game Boy dichotomy. The conference was organised by the Washington-based Foundation on Democracy and Political Change in the Middle East (FDPCME), whose director is Georgetown University Professor Daniel Brumberg. With funding from the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, the foundation has held two conferences in the last two years that have brought together a very representative cross-section of analysts and activists from the Arab World and the United States.

The aim of the conferences — like the symbolism of my two soldiers — was to explore trends in U.S.-Arab relations, specifically in the context of the role of democracy as an important element for both societies. The most recent conference reconfirmed for me two points that I have long believed: a) that Arab and American society are engaged in a epic, almost existential cultural confrontation, similar to what I would later witness in the soldiers' hands, and b) that this confrontation could become a mutually beneficial synthesis rather than a mutually corrosive clash if reasonable people from both sides spent more time together discussing the components of Arab and American political cultures that are driving the process on both sides.

There is a growing global industry today that generates meetings, papers, books and ideas about different cultures around the world and how they interact, clash or learn from one another. This global dynamic is usually expressed in

three parallel ways: political values, economic systems and cultural habits, with the important element of religion usually subsumed under the political and cultural categories. The interaction between different cultures is often presented as a zero-sum game, that one side will triumphfully, and dominate all other cultures and markets; reduced to its most simple, this means having to choose between the Koran or Game Boy (the more common global expression of this dynamic is Jihad vs. McWorld).

I am increasingly convinced that this confrontational interpretation of global cultural interaction is unnecessarily pessimistic and violence-prone. The value of meetings such as the FDPCME conference is that they permit us to identify those broad points of agreement among Arabs and Americans that we can fortify and build upon, while highlighting the points of disagreement that need to be better understood and more deeply discussed.

For example, I value and admire most democratic systems, but I also have some major reservations about using democracy as a yardstick of political change in any part of the South, or the developing world. The tendency in the United States and most other parts of the world is to see democracy as not only the goal of rational societies, but also almost as the criterion and measure of their validity as members of the club of civilised nations. The obvious American tendency today is to trumpet democracy and free market economics as the dual hallmarks of a healthy and meaningful society. Because America is so powerful, the tendency among the rest of the world is to react and to respond to whatever America says, feels or desires. The powerful set the agenda. That's the way the world has always worked.

The most important point of agreement at the recent FDPCME conference was about the centrality of pluralism, freedom and civil society as components of a healthy nation. People from throughout the Middle East, North Africa, the Gulf and the USA generally agreed on the danger of allowing the state or any single political idea to control society. There are many different and credible ideas about how to organise a community on the basis of freedom, pluralism and civic society. American-style democracy is one idea among the many.

The meeting emphasised the very rich interplay between American concepts of participatory democracy and the varied Arab experience with two important elements of our lives: the many episodes of Western colonial domination and political manipulation of Arab societies in the past two centuries, and the very varied examples of Arab societies today seeking new forms of political expression and organisation, ranging from the Islamist, tribalist and monarchist to the police state and models of ethnic anarchism. What becomes clear from such gatherings is the fact that we already notice a cleavage of American and Arab societies into two rough camps: those who worship free market, individualistic democracy, and those who prefer more traditional communal and national configurations, usually with a strong dose of religion and centralised control. Many in the Arab World share the prevalent views of the American establishment about the need for stability and economic liberalisation as top priorities for the Arab World, while many in the United States share the predominant Arab desire for change and more social justice and power-sharing in Arab society.

The Arab World is characterised by an extraordinary range of attempts to develop new political structures and systems that are faithful to traditional Arab social culture

and moral values while also being more participatory, pluralistic and accountable. There is a pronounced tension in the Arab desire to become more politically modern and democratic, without becoming culturally totally American or Western. A Moroccan thinker described this as the quest for a third burst or wave of democracy, following on the direct Athenian democracy and the modern American/Western participatory democracy. It is possible that the Arab World (or East Asia, or India, or somewhere else) will provide this third model of participatory political culture that his democratic yet also traditional and rather tribal. This process of making political history should engage Arabs and Americans in a much closer dynamic of learning and thinking together. Our existing ideological debate enjoys many agreements and divergences that are not sufficiently caught by the mass media's more simplistic focus on dramatic symbols such as Islam, democracy, terrorism or freedom.

The truly fascinating aspect of the Washington conference for me was not the debate about how we should organise our societies politically, but rather the more subtle disagreement about the elements of time and history — elements that I believe are central to the current global cultural confrontation. These days, most Americans, along with their commercial agents or cultural echoes in the Third World, stress the importance of forgetting about history and its specific injustices. We are urged instead to focus on the present and the future, to change our ways so that we fit more easily into the global system of production and consumption that is the world's dominant — if not its only — ideology. We will find satisfaction and security in joining the world's march of free and democratic Game Boy players, we are advised.

A common Arab reaction to this proposition suggests that we do not want to, or are unable to forget about history and its episodes of injustice. The Arab tendency is to look to correction of the mistakes of the past as a key to unlocking the route to a better future. Perhaps the past is comforting to us because as societies we excelled in the past, while today we suffer serious dependencies and distortions. Perhaps it is something deeper, something related to our psychological make-up as people who manifest the cumulative legacy of over ten thousand years of settled village and city life. We have learned something useful over that period of time, particularly that some moral values endure for more than a few generations. Perhaps we are telling the U.S. that we sense some value in retaining elements of the past that can provide a steady base from which to work for a durable future. We may be saying that we will find satisfaction and security by giving expression to the world's ancient and enduring commitment to societies governed by strict rules of morality, religion and cultural limits.

The interaction between Koran and Game Boy will continue for as long as human beings retain a rational capacity to make choices, and to govern their lives according to their own needs and desires. It becomes clear, after some serious head scratching, that the symbols may be striking, but they are not mutually exclusive. We are not involved in a cosmic zero-sum game of winner-takes-all. The more that we engage with others from different cultures, the more obvious this becomes, and the more important it becomes to keep engaging with those whose ideas or cultures differ from ours. This is a strength of modern America, and also a strength of ancient and new Arabs.



Austria election over, the hard work begins

By Steve Pagani

Reuter

VIENNA — Chancellor Franz Vranitzky's success in snap general elections still left Austria facing an uncertain future ahead of a new coalition and a 1996 budget deal.

Many of the 5.7 million voters cast their ballots tactically on Sunday, denying support to small opposition parties to ensure the far-right was kept out of power, political analysts said.

Mr. Vranitzky's Social-Democrats (SPOE) won 38.3 per cent of the vote and will have 72 seats, a gain of seven, in the 183-member parliament. The ecologist Greens and Liberal Forum parties lost both votes and parliamentary seats.

"Many voters backed the SPOE, who had never voted for them before and probably never will again," said Wolfgang Bachmayer, chief analyst at Austria's OGM Polling Institute.

"They supported the SPOE solely to make sure (far-right leader Joerg) Haider did not get into government."

Mr. Haider's anti-immigrant Freedom Party got 22.1 per cent of the vote, a drop of less than half a point on the October 1994 election. The result was a blow to Mr. Haider, who was hoping for 25 per cent, but was unlikely to sound his death knell.

"Haider is hard to put down. He has a solid presence. Because he was oversold, it is a loss for him, but he's not out of the picture," said George Schopflin, professor of East European studies at the University of London.

With 41 seats in parliament, Mr. Haider still commands the strongest far-right parliamentary bloc in Western Europe.

Apart from fear of the far right, voters also revealed their reluctance to swallow the bitter medicine prescribed by conservative leader Wolfgang Schuessel, who sought sweeping cuts in public spending to cut a big budget deficit.

Mr. Schuessel split from a coalition with Mr. Vranitzky's Social Democrats two months ago, prompting elections three years ahead

of schedule.

The government collapsed because the left and the conservatives could not agree on how to slim the 1995 budget deficit of 120 billion schillings (\$12 billion).

Mr. Schuessel refused to accept SPOE proposals to raise taxes to reduce the deficit, calling instead for real cuts in Austria's generous welfare system and pension payments.

"The popular wish was for low-pain reforms, not radical changes as suggested by the OEPB, but rather more moderate ones proposed by the SPOE," Mr. Bachmayer said.

Analysts said Austrians were less concerned with the industrial unrest in France, sparked by Prime Minister Alain Juppé's proposed social security reforms, and said they feared similar instability in Austria.

Analysts said Austrians

were less concerned with

the country meeting the European Union's Maastricht criteria for monetary union than the threat to their living standards.

Austria would currently fail the Maastricht test because of the budget deficit and national debt.

Mr. Schopflin said: "At the end of the day, it looks as though Austrians came down for what they knew, rather than for change, which is consonant with the kind of country Austria is."

"We do not want to see tax rises and more money taken away from our young workers," he told Austrian television.

"We have to work out how we are going to

make cuts and sort out

the problem of early retirement.

Mr. Schuessel argued that voters were influenced by television pictures of the industrial unrest in France, sparked by Prime Minister Alain Juppé's proposed social security reforms, and said they feared similar instability in Austria.

Analysts said Austrians were less concerned with the country meeting the European Union's Maastricht criteria for monetary union than the threat to their living standards.

Austria would currently

To the Editor:

IN HIS article "Putting the horse" (Jordan Times, Dec. 17), architect Ammar Khammash expressed his concern for the preservation of the country's cultural and natural sites, and claimed that the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has given priority to tourism rather than preservation. Although we appreciate Mr. Khammash's concern for preservation, one cannot help being surprised at his skewed approach to the subject and the inaccurate statements included in his article. For instance, he says that, "In Umm Qais, the ministry has started a parking lot and the job was tendered to a contractor who bulldozed an olive grove," and he adds that, "these are the remains of an era of fast decisions, or archaeology dragged by shortsighted plans, and of placing touristic needs before protection." It should be pointed out that the transfer of the car park to the south of the city wall was carefully worked out, for the earlier location was not only offensive but also unacceptable because it was situated within the city wall and sitting on important archaeological remains. Excavation in the earlier car park area this summer has uncovered the podium of a Roman temple. It was precisely the protection of archaeological remains which led to the transfer of the earlier car park to a new location. Furthermore, the new entry to the site corresponds to one of the original entries into the city, and the new car park area is spacious enough to erect a building to cater for the needs of the increasing number of visitors.

As to the other claim that the ministry is thinking of opening the site of Umm Qais as "international excavation site" to excavate and finish all for total display of the city to tourists" is new news to the ministry since such a plan has never been brought up, though there is a scope for further excavation in the site.

As the number of visitors grew, so the need for "tidying up" the cultural heritage site has become more acute. The endeavour to preserve these sites while making them more accessible and intelligible to the visitors is the chief challenge facing all those concerned with ancient sites and monuments today. Needless to say that people have held various views on how these objectives can be achieved.

Regarding Mr. Khammash "understanding" of the minister's remarks during the recent meeting of the Friends of Archaeology, Mr. Khammash is being unique again in his own way. Other participants in the meeting, including conservators, landscape architects, archaeologists and environmentalists, understood the opposite. The debate has focused on how to manage and protect Wadi Rum while allowing tourists to enjoy its majestic landscapes.

The Cabinet decided recently to setup a committee to study issues related to managing tourism in Wadi Rum. This decision stemmed from the government's awareness of the need to preserve this unique site, in a manner we hope will put the horse in its natural place.

We also hope that the findings and recommendations of this commission will ease up the concerns of those who really care for the preservation of natural and historic sites.

The Press Office,
Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities,
Amman.

Peres unveils Syria points

(Continued from page 1)

proposal included a demand that Syria guarantee an end to attacks on Israel by the pro-Iranian Hezbollah guerrilla movement based in Lebanon.

Mr. Peres outlined the understanding as follows:

— No preconditions will be set by either side.

— The talks' aims, nor manner, are what is important.

Here Mr. Peres said that while Israel still wanted "to open negotiations with a summit between the president of Syria and the prime minister of Israel... it is not a condition." Syria has so far refused to raise the talks to senior political echelons.

— The content of the negotiations would influence how long they last and their results.

— There was a differentiation between "issues which are a point of contention and those which require resolution."

Mr. Peres said, for example, the final border was in contention water and security arrangements simply had to be resolved.

Sheikh Sabah retracts resignation

(Continued from page 1)

and the most senior government spokesman in parliamentary debates.

Asked by Al Qabas whether rumours he had offered his resignation were true, Sheikh Sabah was quoted as replying: "This talk has plenty of truth in it."

"It is a result of difference

Negotiations were to be conducted on all subjects.

— Ways to turn the Golan Heights into a centre of economic cooperation rather than of military confrontation would be sought.

— A central role would be required of the United States.

— Preserving quiet on Israel's border with Lebanon was a goal.

Mr. Peres has declined to say how an agreement would deal with the 14,000 Israeli Jews who live on the Golan Heights. It is premature to discuss that, he told reporters this week.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of Israel's opposition Likud Party, criticised Mr. Peres' approach: "When you go down from the Golan Heights it can open a future war," he told Israel Channel Two television.

He said Mr. Peres was paving the way for Syria to return to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. "With this, peace will not come," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Polls show a majority of Israelis agree. Mr. Peres has said an accord would be submitted to them in the form of a referendum.

Despair assails Palestinians trapped in a gilded cage

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace agreement with Israel has left two former fighters abandoned in a U.N.

no man's land. Robert Fisk reports

across the Jordan River to the occupied West Bank not long after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and Mr. Al Gulani 10 years for driving a carload of explosives near Israeli-occupied Ramallah — both men were turned back by Lebanese soldiers the moment they were expelled across the Israeli border last April.

Back in the spring they thought a few complaints from the U.N. would secure their future. Their expulsion by Israel to Lebanon, in contravention of Articles 45 and 49 of the Geneva Convention, could surely be reversed.

Prematurely old at 58 and with a quarter-century of Israeli jails behind him, Mr. Khodr, a PLO loyalist who attempted attacks on Israelis — he served 23 years for taking a rifle

up arms again. Besides, the peace agreement with Israel means history has passed him by. Mr. Al Gulani would be content merely to join his brother Omar in Jordan. But the Israelis refused both men permission to recross the border, claiming they were still security threats. Jordan then announced that Mr. Al Gulani was a threat to its own security.

When humanitarian workers tried to arrange a family visit from Omar to Mohammad Al Gulani, the Lebanese refused him permission to pass through their territory from Jordan; Lebanon was still technically at war with Israel, they said. Now that Amman had made peace with Tel Aviv, he could surely travel through Israel. But the

Israelis refused. Omar called each day, to the phone in the U.N.'s military police guardroom, but had nothing to say to encourage his brother.

By mid-summer, the Arab, Israeli and Western journalists who trooped to the U.N. headquarters to interview the two Palestinians, had, like the rest of the world, forgotten them. In desperation, Mr. Al Gulani wrote a personal letter to PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, pleading with him to help them. Mr. Arafat had given his permission for both of us to move to Gaza, but the Israelis had vetoed our going there on the grounds of security. That's all. Nothing else. And we are still here.

Mr. Khodr is building a cement wall for the U.N. soldiers, partly to show his gratitude for their personal kindness, while Mr. Al Gulani wanders the camp, buying clothes and shoes at the PX store, watching a movie on Irish history given him by Irish troops, playing football and chess with his U.N. protectors, receiving a monthly joint stipend, of

£300 shared with Mr. Khodr from the local PLO office up the Lebanese coast in Rashidya.

The two Palestinians listen to the Arabic service of the BBC and Israeli radio. When Mr. Khodr suffered a hernia the U.N. operated on him. They have tried to cure Mr. Al Gulani's ear infection and asthma, but the two Palestinians suffer the twin curse of international generosity and personal despair.

"Of course we get angry, because we want to start new lives," Mr. Al Gulani says.

"We have served our sentences. We have paid for what we did for the PLO. Now the PLO has made peace with Israel, but we rot here without a future. Why? I get angry, even at the U.N. They want to send a guard with me wherever I go. They are kind, but what can I do?"

It was one of their United Nations protectors who found the right words to describe Mr. Khodr and Mr. Al Gulani. "Political ghosts" is what he called them.

The Independent

No Crown Prince visit in January, Israel says

(Continued from page 1)

come after the Holy Month, which ends in late February. He declined to elaborate except that the Crown Prince would be contacting Israeli "social, economic, political and cultural institutions" whenever he chooses to make the visit.

It will be the first official visit of any member of the Royal Family to Israel. His Majesty King Hussein and Prince Hassan went to Israel last month but the visits came in connection with the death of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The King attended the assassinated prime minister's funeral in West Jerusalem on Nov. 6, and the Crown Prince went to Israel one day later to pay condolences to the Israeli leadership and the Robin

"We are coming with open minds and open hearts for talks to close ranks with our brothers, and we hope a positive outcome will result," said Mr. Abu Hamdan, the Hamas representative in the Iranian capital Tehran.

He added, however: "Our position is clear. We are not participating in elections under the Israeli occupation."

In comments to the Jordan Times on Monday, Ambassador Shamir rejected all suggestions that political considerations were behind Friday's incident at the King Hussein Bridge where Israel refused entry to the Jordanian group which wanted to visit Nablus.

The group was not in touch with Israeli authorities but handled the applications (for entry permit) through

the Palestinian self-rule authority, he said. The Israeli authorities received the applications Thursday afternoon and "there was not enough time" to process them in time for the group's crossing to the West Bank on Friday, he said.

The information was released by the group, many of whose members have close ties with Nablus, had only wanted to "show the world the close relationship between Jordanians and Palestinians."

The incident drew heavy anti-Israeli criticism in the Jordanian press, with newspapers carrying numerous articles and editorial comments assailing the Jewish state.

The group that was denied entry included former Prime Minister Taber Al Masri, at

least 20 members of Parliament, university presidents and professors, journalists, municipal counsellors and independent personalities.

Columnists suggested that Israel had deliberately denied entry to the group because it did not want a high-profile Jordanian visit to Nablus or that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was somehow behind the denial because he perceived the visit as politically oriented.

Mr. Masri, who was one of the coordinators of the visit, said the group, many of whose members have close ties with Nablus, had only wanted to "show the world the close relationship between Jordanians and Palestinians."

The group would have been "welcome in Israel," he said, "particularly that they wanted to celebrate" with the Palestinians the launching of autonomy in Nablus, "which is a result of our peace agreement with the Palestinians."

The incident drew heavy anti-Israeli criticism in the Jordanian press, with newspapers carrying numerous articles and editorial comments assailing the Jewish state.

In general terms, Ambassador Shamir said Monday, "we recognise and respect the right of every Jordanian" to visit Israel following the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October 1994.

But, for the moment, the embassy in Amman operating out of a handful of rooms at a hotel since December last year, cannot simply accommodate any large number of individual applicants for visas, he said.

As such, the issuance of visas is restricted to groups, where the embassy can deal with one travel agent acting on behalf of 50 or 100 applicants, according to the ambassador.

However, individual visas are issued to certain categories of applicants such as businessmen, journalists, delegations etc. in addition to those who apply on health grounds.

The embassy will open its door for individual applicants when it moves to new premises in the Al Rabiah district near the embassy of the People's Republic of China in about six months' time, said the ambassador.

The mission in Amman will host the "largest Israeli consulate," the then foreign minister and now prime minister, Shimon Peres, said in late October while he was here to attend the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit.

Anti-corruption panel planned

(Continued from page 12)

Two important reports on the seminar, one drawn up by the Ministry of Administrative Development and other by the World Bank, will be finalised on Wednesday.

The Ministry of Administrative Development along with the Ministry of Justice have been drawing up a strategy to be adopted by the Cabinet, which has the final say in the matter, Mr. Touq told the Jordan Times.

"These reflect the fact that there is a growing momentum in the Jordanian-Israeli relationship," he said.

attending a seminar at Tel Aviv Open University on satellite teaching... the joint Jordanian-Israeli committee on Jordan Rift Valley development is meeting at a kibbutz (collective farm) near the Dead Sea...." and a seminar is being held in Amman on "Smoothing the Path to Peace: Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli relations."

In addition, he said, there are the "continued consultations" between Jordanian and Israeli businessmen on joint ventures and business opportunities and the wave of "hundreds of Israeli tourists present in Jordan every day from Petra to Umm Qais."

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least 20 members of Parliament, university presidents and professors, journalists, municipal counsellors and independent personalities.

Senior government officials, parliamentarians, journalists, private sector representatives and foreign experts contributed in forming the seminar's recommendations.

The national strategy will be the conclusion of this week's seminar, as well as a similar event held last month.

Senior government officials, parliamentarians, journalists, private sector representatives and foreign experts contributed in forming the seminar's recommendations.

The seminar is being held in Amman on Saturday.

Both governments agreed the other of starting the fighting. Yemen said Sunday the Egyptians attacked Friday.

Eritrean government spokesman Yeanna Ghebrekrestes, contacted by telephone in Asmara, claimed the Yemenis assaulted Eritrea Saturday.

Talks between Yemen and Eritrea, two of the most impoverished countries in the world, to resolve the dispute in recent months have been inconclusive.

Eritrean officials said their forces have been based on the island during and since their 30-year war of secession against Ethiopia, which resulted in Eritrea's independence in 1993.

Yemeni sources said Monday that Eritrea only put their men ashore Friday in a "treacherous act of aggression."

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Gen. Gedj, head of the joint security coordination and cooperation committee, said the date would only be confirmed after completion of a bypass road to be used by Jewish settlers in the area.

"We plan to redeploy Thursday night," Brigadier General Herzl Gedj told reporters. Israel originally had planned to redeploy from Bethlehem on Dec. 18.

Gen. Gedj, head of the joint security coordination and cooperation committee, said the date would only be confirmed after completion of a bypass road to be used by Jewish settlers in the area.

He said the army hoped to finish the road on Tuesday night.

Under the deal expanding Palestinian self-rule signed in September, Israel was to hand over six main West Bank towns by year's end.

"At least three people have been killed and 20 were injured by Tabouk and his gang," said Mr. Eid, who has collected testimony from victims during several trips to Nablus.

Betselem plans a detailed report on Mr. Tabouk's activities in coming weeks, Mr. Eid said. Betselem gained credibility among Palestinians when it monitored Israeli human rights violations.

Palestinians they suspected of being criminals or informers.

The Israeli human rights group Betselem on Monday urged Palestinian security forces to distance themselves from Mr. Tabouk and put him on trial. In the past two years, dozens of renegade streetfighters have been recruited by Palestinian police, mainly in the Gaza Strip, in order to neutralise the

Associated Press.

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Cabinet approves key foreign ownership law

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuter

AMMAN — Jordan has approved a law allowing wider foreign ownership and direct entry into its stock market to help attract foreign capital, the finance minister said Sunday.

"This system is an easy, transparent system which provides the opportunity for substantial foreign investment, and along with a reduced tax system, it will enhance the return on stock," Finance Minister Basel Jardaneh told Reuter.

Mr. Jardaneh said the Cabinet Saturday approved two laws on foreign ownership, including a regulation allowing direct foreign entry into the stock market.

The laws eliminate cumbersome prior approvals by the Cabinet, permit purchases through licensed brokers

and set ownership limits. They also provide tax exemptions for investment in less developed regions in Jordan.

"As for the stock market, it will be possible for a foreign investor to buy directly, on condition the foreign ownership in publicly listed company does not exceed 50 per cent at the end of close of trade in the official market," Mr. Jardaneh said.

Most foreign investment in the more than 100 listed firms in Amman Financial Market has been on hold awaiting the new law.

However, there has been strong foreign interest with funds obtaining previous permission to invest hundreds of millions of dollars.

"This system is very transparent and easy and addresses investors' complaints that the regulations were not easy," Mr. Jardaneh said.

Pakistan lags on human development — World Bank

ISLAMABAD (R) — Pakistan is failing to lift its health and literacy levels to those achieved by poorer nations, according to a World Bank report.

The bank's Pakistan Poverty Assessment Report, completed in September, acknowledged that the proportion of poor people in the population had fallen in the 1970s and 1980s.

Pakistan had about 38.7 million people below the poverty line — defined as a per capita income of about \$50 — in 1990/91, compared to about 43.6 million in 1984/85, it said.

But "human development indicators" for a population estimated at 128 million in mid-1994/95 were lagging far behind.

"Pakistan's performance in important human development indicators has been the Achilles' Heel of the country's development effort," said Hugo Diaz, the World Bank's senior country economist for Pakistan, who prepared the report.

"Without sustained gains in health status and accumulation of skills, continued growth in labour productivity and incomes will not be possible," he said in a statement.

The report said Pakistan, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of \$420 in 1992, trailed behind human development averages for all low-income countries, despite some progress in closing the gap.

The report said access to education, health and family planning remained limited, especially among poor rural women and girls. Services were often not provided or were of low quality. There was little accountability and government resource allocations were too low to provide adequate services.

Pakistan's total fertility rate is 65 per cent higher than the average for all low-income countries; its infant mortality rate is 30 per cent higher, its adult literacy rate is 25 percentage points lower and its gross primary and secondary school enrolment ratios not much more than half the average.

"Pakistan's high fertility rate is a particular concern," the report said. "Growing at the rate of three per cent a year, the population will double every 23 years, placing enormous demands on basic public services, even just to preserve current levels of coverage and quality. It will also place severe pressures on natural resources and the labour market," the report said.

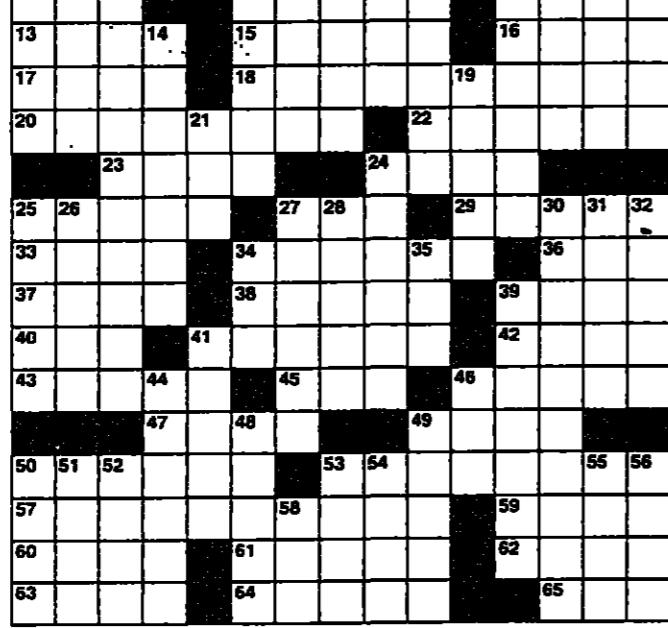
THE Daily Crossword by Bernice Gordon

ACROSS

1 Foot
4 Ground swell
9 Sign at a street crossing
13 "— plenty o'..."
15 Group of scouts
16 Sheltered bay
17 Kind of guide
18 Steinbeck novel
20 With keen judgment
22 Blood bank suppliers
23 Red deer
24 Sassy
25 Tear away
27 Org. for Nicklaus
29 "Lou Grant"
33 Damage
34 Home to Harald V
36 Mouths
37 River in Austria
38 African antelope
39 Pack tightly
40 Pipen
41 Fitches
42 — boy!
43 Succinct
45 Mr. Koppel
46 Loathe
47 Loyal
49 Just
50 South American
53 Knowledge
57 Author of "The Shoes of the Fisherman"
59 — eye
60 Blueprint
61 Wipe clean
62 Tissue
63 Kitchen herb
64 Small children
65 Cincinnati pro

DOWN

1 Type of bread
2 Selves
3 Scarlet O'Hara
4 Spirited horse
5 Caspian Sea feeder
6 Promising
7 Achieved



Yesterday's puzzle solved:

L	I	M	A	C	R	S	T	E	W
A	R	E	S	I	N	A	H	A	R
B	A	K	S	T	B	A	L	C	O
S	N	A	F	U	A	L	E	R	T
H	E	A	R	I	G	A	D	C	O
O	D	I	S	M	E	L	T		
R	O	M	P	Y	O	D	E		
T	O	M	P	Y	O	D	E		
A	P	E	R	A	E	R	A		
L	E	N	O	J	U	R	R		
C	L	O	P	S	Y	R	I		
S	A	T	I	N	S	A	B		
E	R	N	I	E	R	N	I		
J	E	H	O	V	A	W	I		
I	G	O	R	H	O	T	E		
B	O	Y	S	T	Y	N	E		
R	O	Y	S	T	Y	N	E		

48 Not mounted, as a jewel
49 Trio of myth
50 Elec. units
51 Lopez theme
52 Pull
53 Unauthorized disclosure
54 Abstract being
55 Afr. river
56 Pleased
58 Twisted out of shape

Russian poll results not seen hitting reforms

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's parliamentary election, in which communists and nationalists took an early lead, has removed big doubts overhanging financial markets and poses no immediate threat to economic reform, analysts said Monday.

Most Russian markets, rarely sensitive to political events, took the elections to the State Duma lower house of parliament in their stride and economic analysts said they did not believe the poll would lead to a major shift in economic policy.

"It doesn't look like the government has taken a sufficient hit to force anything dramatic in this area," said a senior Western economist in Moscow.

With nearly 30 per cent of votes counted, more than a fifth of voters had chosen the communists. Vladimir Zhirinovsky's ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party had 11 per cent, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's centrist Our Home is Russia had 9.5 per cent and the liberal Yabloko Grouping was on 8.4 per cent.

"I think it is going to be business as usual and with a great deal of difficulty," the economist said.

Communist policies — if they could implement them in full — would reverse much of Russia's market reforms, bringing back expensive subsidies of the past, stepping up state controls and slowing privatisation.

But the Duma has few powers compared to the president and the government and both sides will find their hands partly tied because the old Duma has already approved a 1996 budget.

Analysts recalled the 1993 election, when Mr. Zhirinovsky's success caused alarm but did not prevent the Duma's work.

"I don't think the results of these elections will prevent such work. I don't think there will be any critical majority, left-wing for example, which would hinder such work," Georgy Saratov, a top Yeltsin side, told NTV independent television.

Stock prices fell on the election results but the rouble was unchanged and the fact the election marathon was

finally over was seen lifting selling pressure in some debt markets.

"I think people had some expectations for a slightly more reformist result so that will be a negative factor but I think that will be overshadowed on the market by the fact that it is over," said analyst Tom Reed of AIOC Capital in Moscow.

Four years of economic reform have created thousands of privately-owned firms but driven millions of people below the poverty line.

Dissatisfaction with the results of market economics was seen as a major factor behind the communists' popularity.

But analysts said the Duma has limited powers to interfere in reform.

The main leavers of economic policy lie with the president and key legislation such as the 1996 budget will remain to train them. The budget goes to parliament's upper house on Tuesday but is expected to be passed.

"In the longer term, I think there is nothing the communists can do because there is nothing the Duma can do," Mr. Reed said.

He said privatisation, which has underpinned four years of market reform in Russia, was ultimately controlled by President Boris Yeltsin, who decreed two months ago that policy on state sell-offs would be in his hands.

"I'm not sure the Duma has enough power to slow down or halt privatisation but that may be positive because it means less paper coming on to the market," said equities analyst Dmitry Kryukov of Renaissance Capital in Moscow.

"I guess the markets may be on hold for a while just to see what the new Duma will do, what direction the government will take and what position President Yeltsin will have," he added.

Russia's resurgent communists are no favourites with Western energy investors, but industry analysts said Monday a conservative win in the parliamentary election would not cause oil majors to pack their bags.

"If you're asking if people are going to pull out, I would

tell you no," a senior Western industry source in Moscow said.

"This is no longer 1917 and the economy has already changed so much, there may be little the communists can do," said Michel Lebedeff, director of French oil firm Total in Moscow. "They can try and turn things back, but the industrial reality remains."

Russia needs the investment and knows it."

Communists leader Gennady Zyuganov raised alarms last month when he told Western businessman he was committed to foreign investment but the industrial reality remains.

Zyuganov's campaign bark was harsher than its legislative bite.

"Zyuganov has actually

been in favour of key foreign investment legislation," Mr. Kennedy said.

Investors said they were

more worried about the legal

limbs of Russia's production-

sharing law, a key document

designed to unlock planned,

multi-billion dollar invest-

ments in oil and gas.

Ironically, the communists

and ultra-nationalists have

already approved the draft

law, after revising it to make

it less friendly to Western

investors.

Some reformers, who

drafted the original law,

are now complaining the revised

draft is not good enough and

have said they may try to

block its passage.

Mr. Kennedy said another

good sign of the early elec-

tion results was that Russia's

oil-rich regions were no longer

under the control of Moscow,

as breakaway Chechenya, a

key link in the crude oil

pipeline system.

Shutdown continues as U.S. budget war escalates

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A damaging budget war that has crippled the U.S. government escalated Monday as the White House vetoed two spending bills that would have softened the blow of a partial government shutdown.

But President Bill Clinton

offered a ray of hope, telling reporters that he expected to discuss the impasse during the day with the leaders of the Republican-controlled Congress.

"I intend to talk to them about it," Mr. Clinton said at a news conference to announce his veto of the bills. "I would like very much if we could just sit down and work through this."

Mr. Clinton cited the "serious, serious erosion" of environmental protection and dramatic cuts to health care and other spending contained in the legislation as the reason for the vetoes.

Meanwhile, about 260,000 "non-essential" federal

workers were being told to return home until further notice because the government had no legal authority to pay them.

The Commerce Department also announced it would release no economic reports during the shutdown — the second such partial

closure in about a month.

Without a deal to at least temporarily fund the closed-down agencies and departments — and that prospect seemed elusive — the impasse could drag on for days as both sides debate how to balance the budget in seven years.

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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be very precise in handling any tasks either in business or at home. Try to be more supportive of fellow associates.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 18) You may make plans for entertainment which could go awry, but take this in stride. Blame the planets if your mate acts up today.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Begin the new week properly by steering clear of tensions at home and thereby avoid trouble. Don't invite loud friends into your home today.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be very careful in the answering of letters today so that you do not raise the wrath of others who can help you in your progress.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Your judgement may not be good today, and you could make serious errors where finances and property matters are concerned.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You may feel depressed or imposed upon today, so become more objective and everything will go much better for you.

Microsoft and NBC to start all news cable channel

NEW YORK (R) — In a move aimed at capturing new audiences well into the 21st century, Microsoft billionaire chairman Bill Gates and NBC have said they were forming a four-hour cable television news channel and internet-based online service.

"Today NBC and Microsoft have come together to create news for the next millennium," said NBC president Bob Wright, as announced "one of our inner kept secrets" — a joint venture that marries NBC's top TV network with the world's biggest software company.

The venture has been a subject of intense media speculation for weeks and is the first of what officials in Microsoft Corp. and NBC's parent company General Electric Co. hope will be many more joint projects in cyberspace.

The new 24-hour-a-day cable channel will compete with Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN), which has had a virtual monopoly on the all-news cable market for the past 15 years.

ABC last week announced plans to form an all-news cable network in 1997, but the NBC-Microsoft project will be launched in six months and will start by using a cable channel — NBC's "America's talking" — that is already in existence.

Mr. Wright said he expected the new cable service to have between 25 million and 35 million viewers by the end of 1996, compared to CNN's 67 million viewers. ABC's main obstacle in putting together an all-news channel is finding a distribution network.

Mr. Wright also said he did not expect developing the two new services to have any "unique" negative impact on NBC earnings for 1996, but he said that a greater staff is needed for both services.

A CNN spokesman, Steve Haworth, said the Microsoft-NBC project sounded a lot like what CNN was already doing.

CNN's news pages on the worldwide web are already ready by an estimated three million people a day, he said.

NBC and Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft, said that NBC will handle news gathering for the joint venture, as well as for the Microsoft Network, the nascent online subscription service that Microsoft launched this year and which is also migrating to the Internet.

Microsoft will invest \$200 million over the next five years for its 50 per cent stake in the cable television venture, MSNBC Cable. In addition, the two companies also will invest another \$200 million over the next five years to develop the cable news venture.

The second venture will be called MSNBC Online, they said, an interactive service that will offer text, graphics, television pictures, photos and sound — through technology designed by Microsoft.

Mr. Wright said advances in digital technology will give people new control over news and information and added that online viewers will be able to customise their service to get the news they wanted, in whatever depth they needed.

"No network has ever offered news coverage of such breadth and depth before," Mr. Wright said.

Mr. Gates, whose comments were beamed to the New York news conference from Hong Kong, added, "one of the key

things is that both of the companies are saying we believe in the world of interactivity but we're bringing this world into broadcast."

"We'll be working with NBC to create innovative interactive news content and an integrated media experience," he added.

Mr. Wright said NBC will manage the cable network and the two com-

panies will cooperate in managing the interactive network.

The news service will be developed to integrate news delivery among broadcast, cable and the Internet computer network, the companies said in a news release.

The operation will combine NBC's international news organisation, its business news networks, its local affiliates and its mass audience delivery, along with Microsoft's technology and software expertise, its brand name and its connection to the personal computer user.

Jack Welch, chairman of NBC's parent, General Electric (G.E.), said, "this is a big deal for G.E. because commerce is never going to be the same in the next decade."

DAILY BRIEF
A review of news from the Arabic press

RJ generates JD 24.2m operating profit

★ ★ ROYAL JORDANIAN (RJ) will announce specific measures before the end of this month to resolve the problem of internal and external debts which amount to about JD 500 million (\$700 million). RJ Director-General Nader Dhababi told the Arabic dailies. Internally, the government will consider transferring RJ debts to the Jordan Petroleum Refinery into an equity, and raise RJ's capital and restructuring the airline. Externally, RJ is working on rescheduling the debts to some international banks. Additional measures include transferring some losing RJ offices to general agents.

Mr. Dhababi said RJ made a JD 24.2 million operational profit in 1995, a 68.1 per cent increase over the figure of 1994. He noted that November was the best month of the year in terms of sales. Other major achievements in 1995 showed an increase in passenger traffic by 4.5 per cent and a growth of 21.2 per cent in total cargo traffic over 1994 levels. Cargo services traffic showed an improvement of 43.4 per cent over last year and 6.8 per cent over target. Majid Sabri, vice-president for marketing and sales, announced that RJ's stations in Bahrain, Cairo, Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur, Muscat, New York, Riyadh and Tunis have successfully achieved their targets in 1994.

As for next year, Mr. Dhababi said,

"We have to keep the projected seat factor at about 70.7 per cent and load factor at 63.5 per cent, not that it is the break-even or near break-even point, but I am confident that we have adequate traffic potential in our market to justify it. provided we do not let the competition get away with it. Therefore, a growth of 12.0 per cent in passenger traffic target and 15.4 per cent in excess baggage, 13.3 per cent in cargo and 13.7 per cent in mail has been earmarked for 1996. I am confident these are realisable figures considering the new route and the additional frequencies as well as the expected upsurge of tourist, business and projected traffic to Jordan." In other words, RJ hopes to be able to carry 1,426,988 passengers next year, compared to 1,273,957 this year, and to earn a total of \$381.77 million in 1996 (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

Jordanian workforce estimated at nearly 930,000 workers

★ ★ THE MINISTER of labour told the Lower House's Financial Committee that the total number of Jordanians in the labour force is about 930,000. Jordanian expatriates number about 250,000, the minister said. He estimated the number of non-Jordanians in the local market at 288,000 of whom 42,000 have annual residence permits. The rest are Egyptians (188,000), Syrians (31,000) and Iraqis (9,000). Out of the total number of non-Jordanian labourers, 102,000 have regularised their status by obtaining work permits, the minister said pointing out that 70,000 have voluntarily left the Kingdom over the past three months (Al Rai + Al Dustour).

Darwazeh: Prices of Petroleum products, electricity and gas will not be raised

★ ★ ENERGY AND MINERAL Resources Minister Samih Darwazeh has affirmed that there will not be any increase in the prices of petroleum products next year and that the government is committed to keeping current prices of these products unchanged. He further affirmed that there will not be any increase in electricity charges and that rumours about the government's intention to raise gas prices is totally unfounded. The minister denied that there is a shortage of gas supplies and pointed out that the Jordan Petroleum Refinery sells nearly 1,000 tonnes a day. He noted that the government imports gas from Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq and that Jordan's consumption during summer months does not exceed 400 tonnes a day (Al Rai).

Financial Markets		Jordan Times	
		in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank	
U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	New York Close Date 15/12/95	Tokyo Close Date 18/12/95	
Sterling Pound	1.53465	1.5589**	
Deutsche Mark	1.4433	1.4398	
Swiss Franc	1.1634	1.1611**	
French Franc	4.9655	4.9500**	
Japanese Yen	102.03	101.67	
European Currency Unit	1.2733	1.2775**	
U.S. Dollars	1.0000	1.0000	
Yuan (Chinese)	1.0000	1.0000	
Euro	1.0000	1.0000	
Canadian Dollar	1.0000	1.0000	
Australian Dollar	1.0000	1.0000	
New Zealand Dollar	1.0000	1.0000	
South African Rand	1.0000	1.0000	
Malaysian Ringgit	1.0000	1.0000	
Indonesian Rupiah	1.0000	1.0000	
Thailand Baht	1.0000	1.0000	
Other Currencies	Date 15.12.1995		
Currency	Bid	Offer	
U.S. Dollar	0.7060	0.7100	
Sterling Pound	1.0888	1.0945	
Deutsche Mark	0.4913	0.4936	
Swiss Franc	0.6039	0.6119	
French Franc	0.1437	0.1434	
Japanese Yen	0.6984	0.6979	
Dutch Guilder	0.3584	0.3411	
Swedish Krona	*****	*****	
Italian Lira	0.0444	0.0446	
Belgian Franc	*****	*****	
Other Currencies	Date 15.12.1995		
Currency	Bid	Offer	
Bahraini Dinar	1.3620	1.3760	
Lebanese Lira	0.043750	0.044320	
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1896	
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.5070	2.3670	
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945	
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200	
Omani Riyal	1.8350	1.8410	
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933	
Greek Drachma	0.2485	0.2585	
Cypriot Pound	1.5225	1.5580	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES		
ONOND (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets today.		
U.S. dollar	1.3720/30	Canadian dollar
1.4402/12	Deutschmarks	Dutch guilders
1.6128/38	Swiss francs	Belgian francs
1.1602/12	French francs	French francs
29.60/64	Italian lire	Italian lire
4.9512/62	Japanese yen	Japanese yen
1593.3/4.8	Swedish crowns	Norwegian crowns
101.87/97	Norwegian crowns	Danish crowns
6.5930/30	Danish crowns	Singapore dollars
6.3590/40	Singapore dollars	Australian dollars
5.5767/86	Australian dollars	Hong Kong dollars
1.4154/64		
0.7415/20		
7.7345/55		
ne sterling	\$1.5376/86	
old (ounce)	\$386.70/387.20	

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Steffi Graf cleared of tax fraud

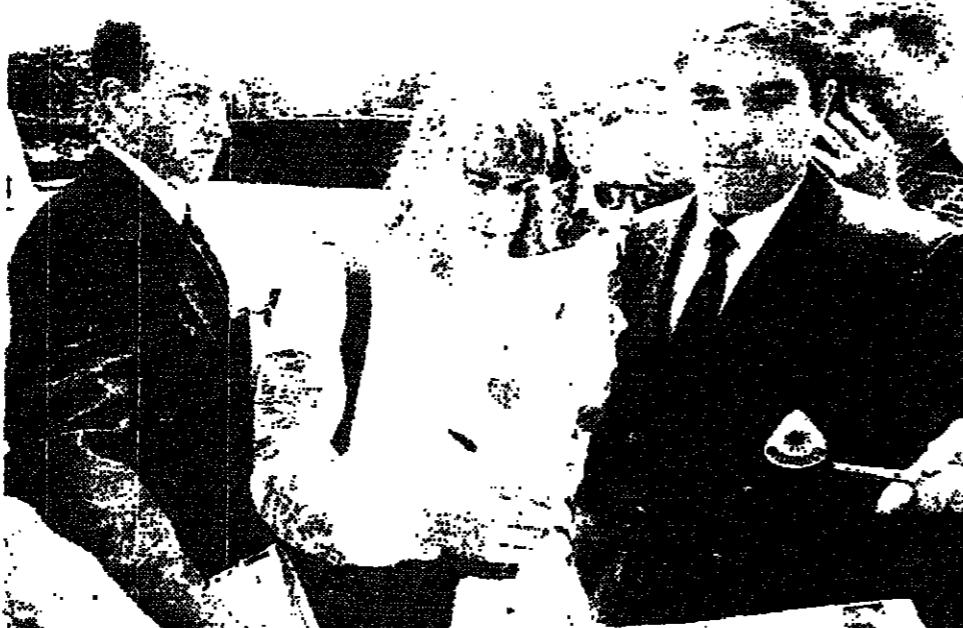
BONN (AFP) — Steffi Graf will not be pursued on tax fraud charges, as investigators are now convinced she knew nothing of her father's handling of her fortune.

Der Spiegel claimed in its latest edition to be published Monday.

The German tennis star, whose father Peter Graf has been detained since August following irregularities in her tax affairs, has twice been interviewed by investigators.

But the weekly news magazine said they now believe Peter Graf kept his daughter in the dark about the full extent of her fortune.

Quoting an interview with



Security guards keep a close eye on Steffi Graf at a tournament earlier this year. Graf has reportedly earned \$128 million in her career.

tax officials, the magazine published the tennis player's reply to the question "Did you ever ask your father about the extent of your personal fortune?"

She said: "I only remember a conversation we had about two three years ago, when he said it was 18 million

marks (\$12.3 million). I thought that didn't sound like a huge amount, but it didn't bother me."

However, Der Spiegel claimed that her actual earnings at that time were more like 80 million marks (\$57.5 million) to 120 million marks (\$86 million).

An application for bail made by Peter Graf's lawyers is to be heard on Wednesday.

Tulio rides his luck, Pele's dreams shattered

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Brazil's irrepressible striker Tulio has scored more than 50 goals this year for club and country. Most of them have been legitimate, some of them have been superb but the two most important ones have been engulfed in controversy.

When Tulio scored in the 80th minute in Brazil's Copa America quarter-final against Argentina in July, he salvaged a draw they had looked unlikely to get and infuriated the entire Argentine nation.

Tulio appeared to control the ball with his arm before scoring, leading Argentine President Carlos Menem to complain of "armed robbery" as Brazil went on to win the penalty shootout.

On Sunday, Tulio pulled it out of the bag again and this time won his club Botafogo the Brazilian championship.

Tulio, who finished as the competition's top scorer for the third time with his tally of 23, did not use his hand but did appear to be in an offside position when he scored a typically opportunist goal that turned out to be the decider.

Santos players complained bitterly afterwards, just as Argentina's had in July, but Tulio was unrepentant. "I'm not going to teach people my secrets for scoring," he said.

The match capped a remarkable year for Tulio who had already outscored Romario in the Rio de Janeiro championship, hitting the back of the net 27 times, with seven goals for his country this year.

Botafogo's triumph had looked extremely improbable when the competition began just four months ago. The players had threatened to go on strike over unpaid wages and there were reports of resentment among other players over the amount of attention given to Tulio.

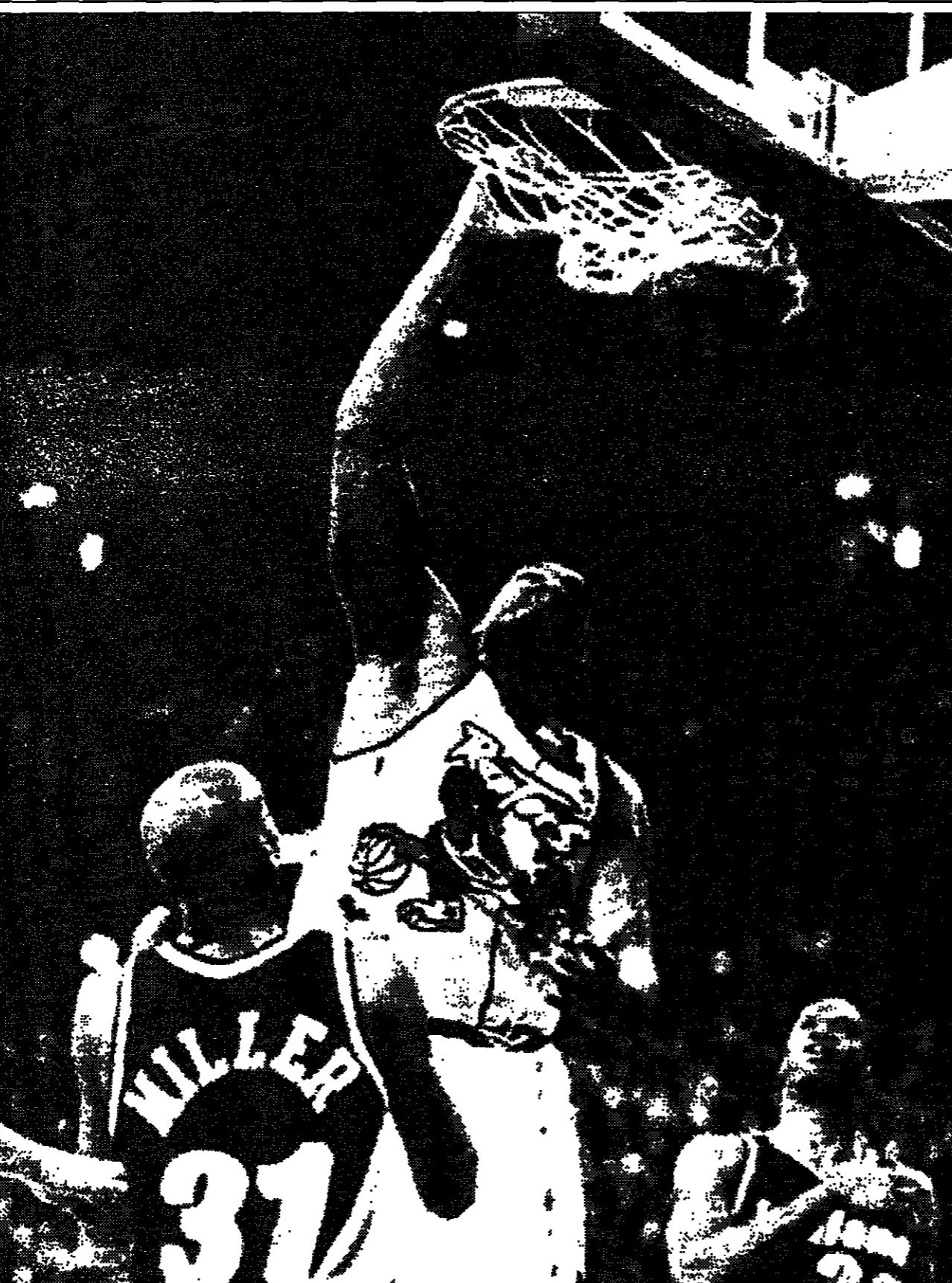
Coach Paulo Autuori, who returned to Brazil after nine years spent coaching Portuguese clubs, was regarded as an unknown, but on Sunday was praised by club president Carlos Montenegro for pulling the squad together.

"When he arrived, nobody knew him. Now, he can go out in the street and say 'I am Paulo Autuori,' Montenegro said.

Botafogo wrecked the dreams of Pele, who had played an active behind-the-scenes role as his beloved Santos rose from the wilderness this year to reach the final with his son Edinho playing in goal.

Pele, who turned Santos into one of the world's great clubs when he played for them, had seen them slip into decline since leaving in 1973. They had not won any trophy since 1984.

Last year, Pele led a movement to depose Miguei Kodja neto as club president and since then has been influential in the club's new policy of investing in promising young players and selling expensive ones.



Toronto Raptors' centre Oliver Miller (centre) slams in a basket in front of Indiana Pacers' guard Reggie Miller (left) and Antonio Davis (right) during first half NBA action in Toronto (Reuters photo)

Raptors score surprising win over Magic

TORONTO (R) — Damon Stoudamire scored 21 points and Alvin Robertson added

20 as the expansion Toronto Raptors thoroughly outplayed the powerful Orlando Magic for a 110-93 victory on Sunday.

Tracy Murray added nine to his 16 points in a decisive 24-11 first-half burst to help the Raptors end a three-game losing streak and beat a team with a winning record for only the second time.

"They beat us in every phase of the game tonight," Magic coach Brian Hill said. "Offensive execution, defensive intensity, they got to the line more. They were by far the better team tonight."

Shaquille O'Neal, playing just his second game of the season, scored 32 points and Penny Hardaway added 18 to pace the Magic attack.

Stoudamire's basket with 38 seconds left in the first quarter sparked the key 24-5 run over the next six minutes.

"Damon played 45 minutes. He was as fresh in the 45th minute as in the first," said Raptors coach Brendan Malone.

Toronto opened its largest lead at 80-56 lead entering the final period and the

Magic got no closer than the final margin.

In Milwaukee, Lee Mayberry and Terry Cummings came off the bench to score 16 and 15 points, respectively, as the Bucks avenged a Friday blowout with an 84-80 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

The Bucks snapped a three-game losing streak and avenged Friday's 112-95 loss to Indiana in the opener of a home-and-home series.

"Obviously, this was our best defensive effort of the night," Bucks coach Mike Dunleavy said. "It was a situation where we were embarrassed by a team on Friday and came back tonight against the same team for a win."

Reggie Miller scored 17 points and Mark Jackson added 16 for Indiana, which saw a four-game winning streak end.

In Cleveland, Dan Majerle

and Terrell Brandon each scored 20 points as the Cavaliers reached the .500 mark for the first time this season with a 92-79 victory over the undermanned Denver Nuggets.

Brandon had just six points after three quarters but scored 14 of Cleveland's final 19 points.

The Cavaliers have won four of their last five games and 11 of 15 since opening the season 0-7.

Don MacLean scored 26 points for the injury-plagued Nuggets, who suited up just eight players.

The Nuggets missed their first 13 three-point attempts.

At Minnesota, Vernon Maxwell scored 30 points and Clarence Weatherspoon added 22 points and 11 rebounds as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Timberwolves 101-99 for their first road win of the season.

Chris Webber and Juwan Howard added 19 points apiece and Robert Pack had 12 points and 14 assists for the Bullets.

Philadelphia, which lost 15

Afghanistan accepts Atlanta invitation

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Afghanistan's National Olympic Committee has accepted the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) invitation to compete in next summer's XXVII Olympic Games in Atlanta.

An IOC statement Monday put Afghanistan's late reply down to "communication problems." The IOC had originally fixed a November 19 deadline for accepting the invite.

Only North Korea of the 197 National Olympic Committees affiliated to the IOC has yet to reply.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Boli bound for Japan

MONACO (AFP) — AS Monaco defender Basile Boli has signed a two-year contract with Japanese 1-League side Urawa Red Diamonds, his club said Monday. No fee was mentioned for the 29-year-old former Glasgow Rangers man, who scored the goal which won the European Cup for Olympique Marseille in 1993. The player, who has more than 45 full French caps, only arrived at Monaco last summer.

Le Saux out with triple injury

LONDON (R) — Graeme Le Saux's chances of playing in next summer's European Championship finals look bleak on Monday after his agent said he had suffered a triple injury to his right leg. The England defender was in hospital after being carried off during Blackburn's 1-0 victory over Middlesbrough at Ewood Park on Saturday where he landed awkwardly while making a challenge on Brazilian Juninho. His agent Jonathon Holmes confirmed on Monday that the player had broken his tibia, dislocated his ankle and torn a tendon in his right leg. England coach Terry Venables, speaking in Birmingham after Sunday's European championship draw, admitted his plans for the competition had been upset by the injury to Le Saux. "Losing Graeme is a big blow for us. We've missed him being out of the team for the last two games through injury and I thought he was just about getting himself right," Venables said.

Women's pole vault record improves

PERTH (AP) — Emma George of Australia bettered her own women's world pole vault record Sunday night, clearing 4.28 metres (14 foot-1/2 inch) at an invitation track and field meet. George, 21, failed in three subsequent efforts at 4.41 metres (14 foot 5-1/2). The previous mark of 4.25 metres (13 foot 11-1/4) was set by George in Melbourne late last month. George has previously competed as a sprinter and long jumper and only switched to the pole vault a year ago. The event will not be contested at the Atlanta Olympics but will be on the programme for the 1997 World Indoor Championships, and will be considered for inclusion in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

Pirates given easy draw

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Newly crowned African club champions Orlando Pirates have been handed an easy draw in defence of their title next year. The South Africans won the continent's top club prize on Saturday with a 1-0 victory (3-2 aggregate) against Asec Abidjan in the Ivorian capital. Pirates, the first sub-Saharan team to win the Champions Cup in 12 years, will open their defence next March against the winner of the preliminary round tie between Majantja of Lesotho and St. Denis, from the island of Reunion.

Tunisia's Etoile looking to sparkle

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Tunisian club Etoile du Sahel will begin their defence of the African Football Confederation Cup with a match against modest Entente Sotrac-Ouakam in Senegal.

Etoile followed in the footsteps of Nigeria Shooting Stars and Bendel Insurance and Stella Abidjan of the Ivory Coast this month by lifting a trophy named after jailed Nigerian politician Moshood Abiola.

The first leg of the decider against Kaloum Stars in Guinea finished goalless and two first-half goals from rising star Imed Ben Younes in Sousse ensured victory for the red-shirted local club.

Now Etoile must try and end a jinx which has seen Stars and Bendel fall at the first hurdle in defence of the title while Stella never even got a chance because Ivorian clubs were barred due to crowd violence.

Young playmaker Zoubeir Béa will be a key figure for the Tunisians, who have a Brazilian coach and a squad that includes several players from the South American country and one from Russia.

Senegal have been missing from Africa for several years because of financial problems

After shunning the competition for national championship runners-up since its inception in 1992, Morocco have entered Kawkeb Marrakech, who confront National Guard of Mauritania.

Atletico stay top with last-minute victory

MADRID (AP) — Jose Luis Caminero scored with two minutes remaining Sunday, breaking a scoreless duel and giving Atletico Madrid a 1-0 victory at Valencia to remain atop the Spanish League by two points.

Caminero's goal came despite the ejection of Atletico defender Delfi Geli just a minutes before for a hard tackle.

Argentine striker Leonardo Angel Biagiati beat his defender down the right side, stopped and sent a sharp cross onto the left foot of the streaking Caminero.

Keeper Andoni Zubizarreta, who had stopped several shots earlier, dove but was beaten by Caminero, who scored his third of the season after being badly shaken up in the first half on a narrowly missed header.

For Atletico (12-3-2), the victory was another response to its critics who have been predicting the club's demise all season. After trouncing Barcelona at home last week, Sunday's victory at 8-3-6 Valencia showed the club can win on the road, where both of its losses have come.

RCD Espanyol kept pace with Atletico, beating Oviedo 2-1 to improve to 11-4-2 and remain in second. Compostela likewise stayed at Atletico, beating racing 2-0 to remain in fourth six points back.

Barcelona beat sporting Gijon 1-0 on Saturday to remain in fourth, two behind Espanyol and two ahead of Compostela. Betis lost some ground in a 1-1 draw with cross-town rival Sevilla on Saturday.

Elsewhere Sunday, it was: Albacete 3, Tenerife 1; Salamanca 3, Real Sociedad 3; At Salamanca, Estonian Valeri Karpin and Oscar de Paula rallied Sociedad from a 3-1 deficit with second-half goals. Joan Barbara's sixth goal of the season, Ovidiu Stanga's fourth and another by Miguel Torrecilla jumped Salamanca 4-6-7 out to the 3-1 advantage by the 31st minute.

Karpin scored one in the 17th to try to keep Sociedad 5-4-8 close, drew it closer with his seventh of the year in the 59th before De Paula tied the game 10 minutes later.

Zaragoza 5, Valladolid 3: At Zaragoza, Argentine international Sebastian Ramberg scored in the 36th and 42nd minutes to make a successful Spanish debut and give Zaragoza its first victory at home in six games. Uruguayan midfielder Gustavo Poyet added two of his own in the second half for Zaragoza.

An own goal by Ivan Camarinha in the 16th, plus Ramberg's pair goal Zaragoza 6-4-7 out to a 3-0 lead before Valladolid responded just before the end of the first half for Zaragoza.

Valladolid lost its ninth of the season and remained in last place in the 22-team First Division with a 2-6-9 record and 12 points.

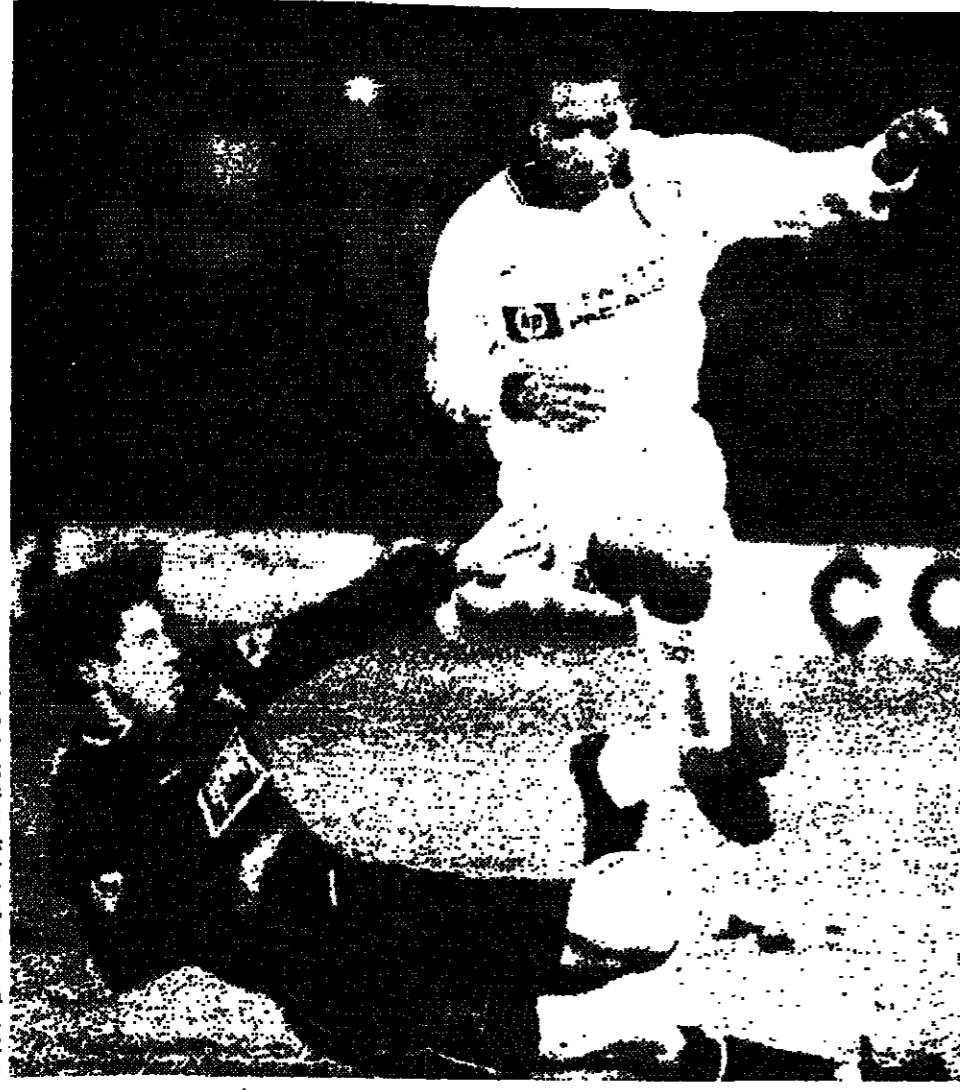
Albacete 3, Tenerife 1: In the Canary Islands, Croatian midfielder Nenad Bjelica scored his fifth and sixth goals of the season to lead Albacete to only its fourth victory of the season (4-4-9).

Antonio Pinilla gave Tenerife the lead in the 22nd minute before Bjelica put Albacete ahead with goals in the 27th and 61st minutes.

Deportivo 6, Rayo Vallecano 0: In Madrid, six different players scored for Deportivo, including Bebeto with his league-leading 13th, and Donato as La Coruna won its seventh (7-3-7).

The loss was a league-worst 11th for Rayo (4-2-11), which stayed two points ahead of Valladolid.

	RESULTS
Toronto	110
Philadelphia	101
Milwaukee	84
Cleveland	92
Washington	112
Orlando	93
Minnesota	99
Indiana	80
Denver	79
Portland	100



Tottenham's Chris Armstrong leaps over Wimbledon defender Kenny Cunningham during their premiership match at Selhurst Park (AFP photo)

Fowler double leaves United reeling

LIVERPOOL (AFP) — Two superbly taken goals by Liverpool's brilliant young striker Robbie Fowler dealt arch-rivals Manchester United's title hopes a major blow in a pulsating encounter at Anfield on Sunday.

Fowler struck at the end of each half to leave second-placed United trailing Newcastle — who beat Everton 1-0 on Saturday — by seven points going into the hectic Christmas programme.

Liverpool, whose run of poor form ended with a 1-0 victory at Bolton last week, dominated an explosive match from the outset but were denied an early breakthrough by some inspirational saves from United's goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel.

Danish star Schmeichel, returning to the side after an elbow operation, kept United

in the game with a string of top class saves as Liverpool pressed forward in the first half.

But there was little he could do to deny Fowler his first goal in six games on the stroke of half-time when the England 'B' striker curled in a brilliant free-kick that left the Great Dane rooted to the goal-line as the ball whistled into his top right corner.

The goal was no more than Liverpool deserved as their fluent passing, imaginative running and greater tenacity in the tackle left United floundering.

"We were dreadful, absolutely dreadful in the first half," admitted United boss Alex Ferguson.

United made a better fist of it in the second-half but their inability to break down a composed Liverpool de-

fence forced Ferguson to take off seven million pound striker Andy Cole and send on the inexperienced Paul Scholes.

The match ebbed and flowed with chances coming at both ends. Eric Cantona forcing a smart save out of Liverpool's David James at one end and Collymore crashing a vicious shot against the cross bar at the other.

But three minutes from time Fowler sealed the three points for the Reds, who move up to fifth, when he cut inside in the defence on the edge of the box and buried a low shot into a Schmeichel's left-hand corner.

Ferguson added later: "I think particularly in the first half, that that was the most lifeless performance I've seen from us."

The Thais had trouble matching the Thai team's depth. The hosts

had entered 640 athletes here; nearly 120 more than Indonesia's contingent. The Indonesians have also had trouble matching the Thai team's depth. The hosts

had entered 640 athletes here; nearly 120 more than Indonesia's contingent.

Thailand tops SEA Games table

CHIANG MAI (AP) — Already master of the 18th Asian Games, Thailand scored a final knockout on the closing day as its boxers put away opponents in 11 out of 12 final bouts.

Traditional Thai hospitality did not extend to the sports arenas here, as the insatiable hosts dethroned regional power Indonesia and demolished opponents in sporting ranging from athletics to yachting.

After nine days of competition, the climactic boxing wins propelled the final Thai gold count to 157, with Indonesia left far behind at 76. The Philippines was third ranked with 33 trailed by Malaysia with 31.

Singapore is taking home 26, Vietnam 10 and Burma five. There were no golds to go around for Brunei, Cambodia or Laos.

Also on the final day, Singapore emerged winners in men's water polo and the equestrian team three-day event. A Thai rider took the individual three-day competition, and the Thai sepak takraw team downed Singapore for gold in the regatta event.

A closing ceremony in the main stadium was to feature 12,000 performers, a final gathering of the 3,200 athletes and a repeat of the spectacular fireworks display with which the games began.

The biggest sports event ever held in Southeast Asia, the Chiang Mai games were the seventh won by the Thais but only the second since Indonesia joined the grouping in 1977.

Indonesia's downfall was generally ascribed to a young, relatively inexperienced team, the Thai hometown advantage, and the excellent preparations of the winners.

The Indonesians have also had trouble matching the Thai team's depth. The hosts

had entered 640 athletes here; nearly 120 more than Indonesia's contingent.



Silverdome. Detroit beat Jacksonville 44-0 (Reuters photo)

Bills win battle for AFC East

BUFFALO (AP) — The Buffalo Bills, who failed to make the National Football League playoffs last season after four straight futile trips to the Super Bowl, beat Miami 23-20 Sunday to win the American Conference East division.

Linebacker David White's interception set up Steve Christie's 25-yard field goal with barely more than six minutes left as the Bills won the AFC East title for the sixth time in eight years.

Thurman Thomas rushed for 148 yards and scored two touchdowns. The Bills are 41-2 during the regular season when Thomas runs for more than 100 yards.

"When he runs like that, it filters over to the line," said center Kent Hull. "We block better. It makes our job easier."

It was Boniol's fifth field goal of the game and he was given the chance to show his mettle.

"I've been wanting one of these games," he said. "A five-for-five where you hit a game-winner. I was glad to finally get this chance."

Boniol's winning kick capped a 14-play, 58-yard drive which featured three third down conversions on pass completions by Troy Aikman.

"There was never a doubt, huh? We had them all the way," said a relieved Cowboys coach Barry Switzer. "It was a real gun check."

The victory kept the Cowboys in sole possession of first-place in the National Conference East, one game ahead of Philadelphia.

Steve Emtman recovered Thomas' fumble at the Buffalo 33 to set up Pete Stoyanovich's 30-yard field goal and Marino connected with Eric Green for a 25-yard touchdown one play after Calvin Jackson returned an interception 23 yards.

The Bills regained the lead just before the third quarter ended on an 11-yard scoring toss from Jim Kelly to Thomas.

Kelly completed 16-of-28 passes for 139 yards, while Marino was 18-for-28 for 254 yards. The Dolphins were held to 42 rushing yards after

gaining 148 against Buffalo on October 29th. Marino also was sacked three times.

"We knew if we could stop the run, we could get after Dan," said Bills linebacker Bryce Paup. "We gave them a few new wrinkles."

At Dallas, the Cowboys posted a last-gasp 21-20 victory over the New York Giants as Chris Boniol kicked a 35-yard field goal as time expired.

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Dallas had already earned a playoff berth, and can still earn home-field advantage throughout the playoffs if San Francisco loses one of its next two games and the Cowboys win their season finale at Arizona.

The near-miss was no joke to Aikman, who admitted the Cowboys would have to improve to stay on course for the Super Bowl.

"We're going to have to do a lot better than this if we're going to get very far," he said.

NFL RESULTS			
Buffalo	23	Miami	20
Carolina	21	Atlanta	17
Chicago	31	Tampa Bay	10
Cleveland	26	Cincinnati	10
Detroit	44	Jacksonville	0
Houston	23	NY Jets	6
Philadelphia	21	Arizona	20
Washington	35	St. Louis	23

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Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:30

CONCORD "2"
Sylvester Stallone...in

ASSASSINS

Shows: 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:15

TODAY

Israel 'clarifies' stand on Jordanian property

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Israel has explained to Jordan that the issue of Jordanian-owned property in the occupied territories could be discussed only in the context of the broader negotiations on the status of refugees and cannot be addressed on a bilateral level, the Israeli ambassador to Jordan said Monday.

Ambassador Shimon Shamir also said the draft of the much-delayed transport agreement between Jordan and Israel is ready for signature, but the signing of the document is being delayed because of technical hitches in a separate but related accord on air services.

Mr. Shamir said the Jordanian government had approached the Israeli government to address the issue of property owned by Jordanians but which remain under Israeli control after the Jewish state occupied the West Bank, including Arab East Jerusalem, in the 1967 war.

The issue is an irritant for many Jordanians who argue that there is no reason for Israel to deny the property rights of Jordanians after Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in October 1994.

However, Ambassador Shamir said Israel had "clarified" to the Jordanian government that its interpretation of the peace treaty in this context is that from the day

the treaty was signed Jordanians were removed from the list of "citizens of enemy countries," clearing the way for them to own property in areas controlled by Israel.

"But the treaty is not retroactive," according to Israel's interpretation as explained by the ambassador. As such, "controversial law on absentee property" applies to all Jordanian property that went under Israeli control in 1967. In practical terms, this means that the issue would have to be dealt within the framework of Israeli-Palestinian final status negotiations scheduled to begin in May 1996.

No immediate Jordanian comment was available on the Israeli "clarification." On the status of bilateral agreements stipulated in the Oct. 26, 1994 peace treaty, Mr. Shamir said four other documents were also ready for signature, but they have to wait until after the transport accord is signed in line with the "order of signing" as stipulated in the treaty.

Mr. Shamir declined to be specific on the differences holding up the air services agreement except to say that they were "technical" and related to "airspace etc." He likewise did not provide a timeframe to the eventual signing of the accord.

According to Jordanian officials, one of the key difference is over the altitude that Israel is willing to allow

Jordanian aircraft to fly at in its airspace.

The transport accord provides for the entry of Jordanian and Israeli vehicles to each other's territory and would launch direct bus and taxi routes between the two countries.

Since the signing of the peace treaty more than one year ago, Jordan and Israel have signed eight agreements on cooperation (tourism, energy, agriculture, security and combating drugs, boundaries, health, the environment and trade).

In addition to the transport accord, which is seen as key to the implementation of some of the already signed agreements, there are other pending accords, on science and technology, Aqaba-Eilat maritime borders and telecommunications.

"These four documents are also ready for signing, which could be done in one day in a ceremony after the transport accord is signed," said Mr. Shamir.

When the five accords are signed, the total of 13 accords "will form the infrastructure for close Jordanian-Israeli interaction," said the ambassador.

Mr. Shamir, who took office in mid-1995 as Israel's first ambassador to Jordan, said he expected the second year after the signing of the peace treaty to bring about

(Continued on page 7)



PNA-HAMAS TALKS: Palestinian National Council (PNC) acting Speaker Salim Zanoun (right) shakes hands with Hamas representative Khaled Mishal before starting a meeting in Cairo on Monday on settling some of the differences between Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority (see page one) (AFP photo)

Government is likely to set up special anti-corruption panel

By Lola Keillani
Special to the Jordan Times

JORDAN — To demonstrate its seriousness in its fight against corruption, the government intends to set up an anti-corruption commission to implement a national strategy against corruption, informed sources said Monday.

Although the government has not yet formally adopted the strategy, an informed source who took part in the seminar entitled "Integrity in Government" on

with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker along with foreign experts in the fight against corruption, told the Jordan Times that the commission was expected to be headed by Sharif Zeid.

"The prime minister, who showed extreme interest in cracking down on corruption, seemed willing to head the commission," said the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. This step would demonstrate Jordan's political will in its fight

against corruption, according to the source.

Sharif Zeid, in a speech delivered on his behalf by Muhibeen Touq, minister of administrative development, at a two-day meeting on corruption this week, reaffirmed the government's commitment to fight corruption at all levels.

During Monday's meeting the prime minister briefed foreign experts who took part in the seminar entitled "Integrity in Government" on

measures already adopted in Jordan to fight corruption and expressed genuine interest in adopting further action, the source said.

Experts from the United Kingdom, Uganda, Singapore, Bolivia, Hong Kong, and the World Bank presented the prime minister with a short report about the outcome of the seminar and topics addressed by the participants.

(Continued on page 7)

Armed resistance is a right, Sfeir asserts

BEIRUT (R)— Lebanon's Maronite patriarch, apparently expressing extreme frustration at the situation of the Christian minority, was quoted on Monday as saying armed resistance could be permissible against political tyranny.

Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, who is the last effective independent Christian voice in Lebanon, said in a Sunday sermon citizens must not obey an authority which "breaches moral codes, basic

human rights or the teachings of the Bible."

He then spelled out the conditions in which armed resistance was justifiable.

"Armed resistance against tyranny of the political authority is not legitimate except under the following conditions," Cardinal Sfeir was quoted by newspapers as saying.

The conditions were: "1. When there is definite, severe and continuous violation of basic rights. 2. When all

other measures to improve the situation have been exhausted. 3. When such (armed) resistance does not lead to a worse situation. 4. When there is hope of success. 5. When it is impossible to conceive a better solution."

Cardinal Sfeir did not indicate whether he believed Lebanon's Christians had reached the point legitimate violence, but his statement, five years after the community emerged defected and di-

vided from Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war, surprised observers.

The Synod of Lebanese Bishops also said the return of peace to Lebanon should mean "a return to strict respect for human rights," it asked the government to stop arbitrary arrests, and to abolish torture and free political prisoners.

The synod's calls got a cool reception from some Muslim spiritual leaders.

Shin Bet hit hard in Rabin inquiry

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — The inquiry into the killing of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin dealt a blow to the reputation of Israel's secret service on Monday, warning agents they stood to be harmed by its findings.

The justice ministry said warning letters were sent to six top agents in the Shin Bet secret service, including the Shin Bet head, and to an assistant police commander.

Yossi Melman, author of books on Israeli security services, said the announcement was devastating for the Shin Bet, responsible for protecting Mr. Rabin from the Jewish gunman who killed him in Tel Aviv on Nov. 4.

"It's the day of the long knives for the Shin Bet," Mr. Melman, a correspondent for the newspaper Haaretz, told Israel Radio.

He predicted the head of the Shin Bet — known only by the Hebrew initial of his name, KAF — would be forced to resign.

The justice ministry said warnings were being issued to give the recipients time to prepare for when the committee resumes its hearings on Dec. 31.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who succeeded Mr. Rabin, appointed the three-man commission of inquiry led by former Chief Justice Meir Shamgar to investigate the security lapse which allowed Amir to shoot Mr. Rabin in the back at close range.

Asked to comment on the warnings on Monday, Mr. Peres told reporters: "We are a country that respects the law. There is an investigating committee. Whatever they will say I shall respect. I don't have any additions and I don't have any changes."

The Shin Bet, founded with the creation of the state in 1948, is responsible for preventing hostile secret activity.

TV to screen Rabin killing video; court opens assassin's trial today

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Private Israeli television announced Monday that it would broadcast for the first time a video showing the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to coincide with the opening Tuesday of his assassin's trial.

Yigal Amir, a young Jewish radical who boasted that he gunned down Mr. Rabin as an act of "divine justice" to kill the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, is scheduled to appear before a three-judge tribunal Tuesday on charges of premeditated murder.

The 25-year-old law student and anti-peace activist was arrested seconds after the shooting and faces life in prison. A special cell has already been reserved for him in the high-security section of Beersheba prison in the desert.

He faces a separate charge of "conspiracy against the state" in another trial set to begin early next year which includes his brother Hagai, 27, and a Jewish settler, Dror Hadani, 23, both accused of

complicity in Mr. Rabin's murder.

Channel Two television said it had purchased the only known images of the actual killing and planned to broadcast the film despite efforts by the commission investigating the assassination to prevent it being made public.

Israel Radio said the video would be shown Tuesday evening, but the network president, Shalom Kitai, said only that the images would be broadcast during prime-time before Friday.

Channel Two reportedly paid \$300,000 for the broadcast rights to an unidentified amateur cameraman who shot the video, but network executives refused to confirm the sum.

The film was shot from the roof of a shopping centre located next to the parking lot where Mr. Rabin was gunned down on Nov. 4 as he left a giant peace rally.

The video was turned over to the investigating commission a month ago and is also

to be shown as evidence at the trial.

Journalists and others who have seen the 80-minute video say it clearly shows the moment when Amir walked up and shot Mr. Rabin twice in the back at point-blank range.

Investigators said the film sequence underscores the total breakdown in security surrounding the prime minister.

At one point before the shooting, Amir can be seen chatting with an agent of the Shin Bet internal security service responsible for Mr. Rabin's protection.

Rafi Reshef, a Channel Two journalist who viewed the video, said it showed the parking lot where Mr. Rabin was shot and that it was clear anyone could have entered the zone.

Draconian security was meanwhile being prepared Monday around the Tel Aviv District Court where Amir will be tried, police sources said.

COLUMN

Red tape robs 'away-from-home' cosmonauts of vote

MOSCOW (R) — Two Russian cosmonauts orbiting the Earth aboard the Mir space station were unable to vote in Sunday's parliamentary elections because they failed to meet new tougher rules for away-from-home voters. Interfax News Agency quoted Russia's Space Flight Centre outside Moscow as saying that the cosmonauts lost their vote when parliament failed to renew rules issuing special cards to voters intending to be away from their district on polling day. The two cosmonauts, Sergei Avdeyev and Yuri Gidzenko, blasted off from the Baikonur Space Centre last Sept. 3 and are due to return to Earth on Feb. 29, more than a month later than originally planned. A German cosmonaut, Thomas Reiter, is also on board the station.

Britain's 'most dangerous pub' to close

LONDON (AFP) — A south London pub dating from the 1950s which police claim has been a haven for criminals most of its existence is due to be closed and demolished, police said. The Saint-Helier Tavern at Carshalton in the southern suburbs of the capital, once employed Charlie Kray, brother of the notorious gangster twins Ronnie and Reggie Kray. According to police, the Kray twins used the pub as a hideout on several occasions. In the last decade alone, the pub has been the scene of a murder and an attempted murder, while a body was cut up there. Shoots have been fired and innumerable fights have erupted on the premises. "It is the most dangerous pub in the country," said Inspector Trevor Shepherd of Sutton Police. The history of this pub has been consistently appalling. ... The regulars were a motley crew of thieves and thugs," he said. "There was a favourite game they used to play of who could slash off the barman's tie closest to his throat," Mr. Shepherd added. The Saint-Helier is owned by Whitbread Breweries who wanted to renovate it completely and reopen it. Local authorities responsible for licensing public houses refused after petitions from local people.

30,000 rabbits attract 30,000 visitors to show

STUTTGART, Germany (AFP) — Some 30,000 rabbits attracted a similar number of visitors to the world's biggest rabbit show ever held over the weekend, organisers said. A total of 5,500 exhibitors from Germany and abroad took part in the show here, displaying rabbits of 68 different breeds.

Police to give out free soft drinks to alcohol-free drivers

BRISBANE, Australia (AFP) — In a promotional coup for Pepsi Cola, police here said Monday they will give away a free can of the soft drink and a congratulatory message to every alcohol-free driver stopped at random breath testing spots Wednesday. Those who fail will be booked. Police throughout the eastern Australian state of Queensland have adopted the theme "a soft drink is a safe drink" during their annual festive season blitz on drunk driving, in an attempt to make motorists more aware of the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol.

Juppe is chastened as France returns to work

PARIS (Agencies) — France returned to work Monday after three weeks of strike paralysis which observers say has chastened Premier Alain Juppe six months after he took office with a crushing majority government.

Commentators focused on the fact that Mr. Juppe, in the space of 20 days, has been reduced from arrogant defiance to making a number of key concessions in the face of nationwide anger at his welfare reform plans.

"Juppe: the gently way," said the daily *France-Soir*, reporting Mr. Juppe's comments in a Sunday night TV interview in which he offered six months of talks on implementing his reforms, in addition to a "social summit" later this week.

"Here we see a humble Alain Juppe, launching a wide social dialogue over six months, with a round table

for the unions," said the daily *Liberation*, under the headline "Juppe: The Social Apprentice."

The comments came as the country's trains, metros and buses continued to lurch back into action after railworkers voted to end strike action which escalated into France's worst social crisis since the May 1968 revolts.

For the first time in three weeks commutes, who for the last 20 days have faced gridlocks, long hikes or simply stayed at home, were able to travel to work in relative comfort. Jams built up around Paris, but nowhere near the scale of the record monster snarl-ups of the last three weeks.

The SNCF national rail authority said 50-60 per cent of services were running nationwide. All Paris' metro lines were running, as were the Eurostar express trains to